

DIPHTHERIA VACCINE FACTS

Keeping our family and community safe

Diphtheria (*diff-THEER-e-uh*) is spreading in Western Australia. There is some wrong talk going around about the disease and the needles. Here are the real facts.



MYTH: *"This is just ANOTHER new needle they want us to have."*



FACT: **This vaccine is not new.**

It has been used safely for more than 100 years. It is the same "3-in-1" needle (for diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough) that school kids have been getting for a long time. It is also the exact same needle used to prevent tetanus after you get injured, like after stepping on a rusty nail. It is one of the safest medicines we have.



MYTH: *"I had my needles as a kid, so I'm safe now."*



FACT: **The protection from these needles wears off as we get older.**

Research shows that by the time people are middle-aged, about half of them are no longer protected. Because the germ is spreading right now in our communities, everyone should get a booster needle if they haven't had one in the last 5 years to keep their protection strong.



MYTH: *"Diphtheria isn't a big deal. It's just a sore throat or skin sore."*



FACT: **Diphtheria can be a very serious and scary illness.**

It is a nasty germ that makes a toxin (poison) in your body. This poison can cause a thick grey coating in your throat that makes it hard to breathe or swallow. Even if you feel better at first, the poison can travel through your blood and damage your heart and nerves weeks later. Without quick treatment, this disease can be dangerous.



MYTH: *"People who had the needle are still getting sick, so it doesn't work."*



FACT: **The needle is doing its main job: stopping people from getting seriously sick.**

Most people in this outbreak who got sick but had their needles only had a mild sickness. The needle protects you from the deadly poison the germ makes, to keep you out of hospital or from dying.

What should I do?

- 1 Talk to your clinic:** Ask your doctor, nurse, or Aboriginal Health Practitioner if you and your kids are up to date.
- 2 Get the needle:** It is safe and free for everyone in our communities.
- 3 See the clinic early:** If you or your family have a skin sore or a sore throat, go to the clinic straight away to get tested.



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