

Diphtheria

Identification

an acute bacterial disease that usually affects the tonsils, throat, nose, or skin.

Infectious agents

Diphtheria is caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* (bacterium).

Occurrence

An endemic disease common to children who are not immunized or did not receive adequate immunization. It can also happen to adults and adolescents. Diphtheria is found in many parts of the world. It is a bacterium that causes the disease and lives in the mouth, nose, throat, and skin of the infected person. In the early stage, diphtheria can be mistaken as a sore throat. It might be hard to swallow due to a membrane that forms over the throat and tonsils. The infection also causes the lymph glands and tissue on both sides of the neck to swell to an unusually large size. A person might experience difficult or rapid breathing. A fever and chill can also be the causes of diphtheria. Some people who have diphtheria may not be ill but can still spread it.

Reservoir

Humans

Mode of Transmission

Diphtheria is transmitted from people to people by respiratory secretions or droplets in the air.

Incubation Period

It takes between two and four days for the symptoms to appear.

Period of Communicability

It varies depending on when virulent bacilli disappear from the discharges. It's usually more than two weeks or rarely more than four weeks.

Susceptibility and resistance

Infants born of immune mothers are relatively immune; protection is passive and usually lost before six months. Life long immunity is usually, but not always, acquired after disease or in apparent infection. Clinical attack does not always lead to lasting immunity. Prolonged active immunity is induced by immunization with diphtheria toxoid. Antitoxic immunity protects against systemic disease but not against local infection in the nasopharynx.

Methods of Control

Preventive measures:

- 1) People at age 2-, 4-, 6-, and 18 months, and 5 years are recommended to receive Diphtheria toxoid which is given as DTP (Triple Antigen). Inoculation should be repeated at the age of 15 and every 10 years thereafter. (Given as ADT)
- 2) Antibiotics such as penicillin and erythromycin are also prescribed for those who have Diphtheria. It helps fight the diphtheria bacteria.
- 3) People who have diphtheria should be hospitalized until they fully recover.
- 4) Those who have not been immunized who come into close contact with infected people should get a series of diphtheria shots.
- 5) A booster vaccine can be given to people who have been immunized before.

Epidemic measures

- Define the population groups at special risk.
- Immunize the largest possible proportion of the population involved, especially infants and preschoolers.
- Repeat immunization efforts one month later to provide at least two doses.