

WITHOUT TREATMENT,

# 40% TO 50%

OF INFECTED PEOPLE DIE FROM DIPHTHERIA,



WITH THE HIGHEST DEATH RATES IN  
CHILDREN UNDER 5 AND ADULTS OVER 40.

## DIPHTHERIA

Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes heart and nerve problems. The disease can be spread from an infected person (or someone who carries the bacteria but has no symptoms) by coughing and sneezing. Diphtheria can also be spread by contaminated objects or foods.

Once infected, dangerous substances called toxins, caused by the bacteria, can spread through the bloodstream to other organs and cause significant damage such as injury to the heart, kidneys and other organs. Nerve damage and paralysis can also result.

### SYMPTOMS

Signs and symptoms of diphtheria may include:

- A sore throat and hoarseness
- Painful swallowing
- Swollen glands (enlarged lymph nodes) in the neck
- A thick, gray membrane covering the throat and tonsils
- Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- Nasal discharge
- Fever and chills

Signs and symptoms usually begin two to five days after a person becomes infected.

### PREVENTION

The diphtheria vaccine is usually combined with vaccines that protect against tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough). This three-in-one vaccine is known as the DTaP vaccine for children. For adolescents and adults, it is called the Tdap vaccine.

For the best protection against diphtheria, your children need to receive all recommended doses of the vaccine. To see if your children are up-to-date on their vaccines, look at the [CDC's immunization schedule](#) and talk to your healthcare provider.