

# Diphtheria

## Fact Sheet



Department of Health  
and Human Services

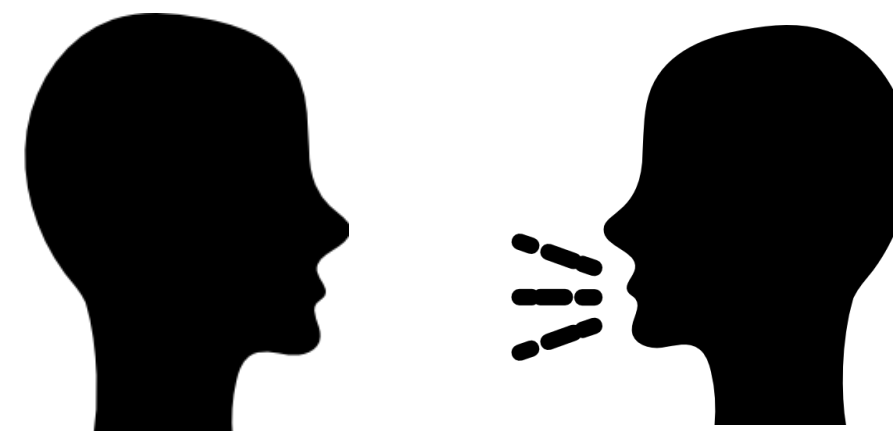
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Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives

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Diphtheria is a disease caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* bacteria that makes a poison (toxin).

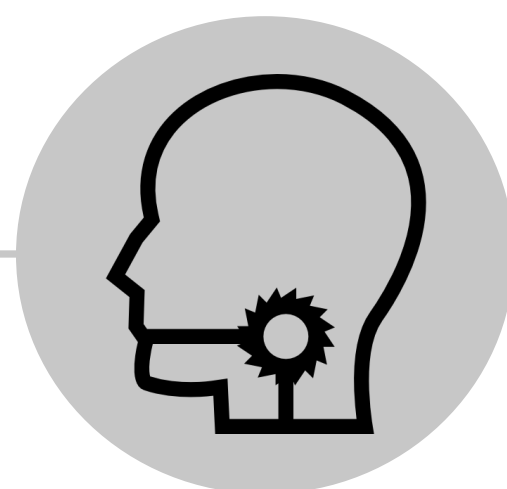


It is spread from person-to-person, usually by coughing or sneezing. Rarely, people get sick from touching fluid from open sores caused by diphtheria.

## Signs and Symptoms



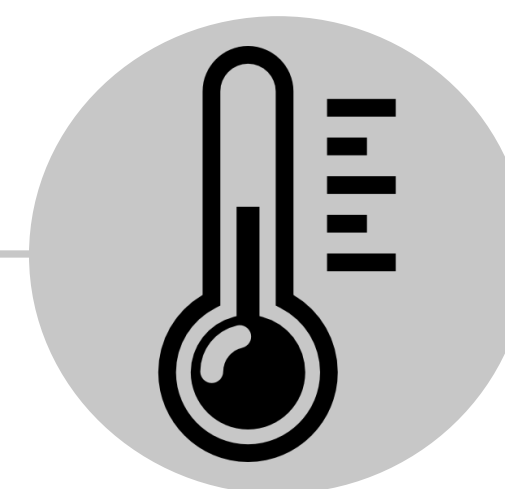
Weakness



Sore Throat



Loss of Appetite



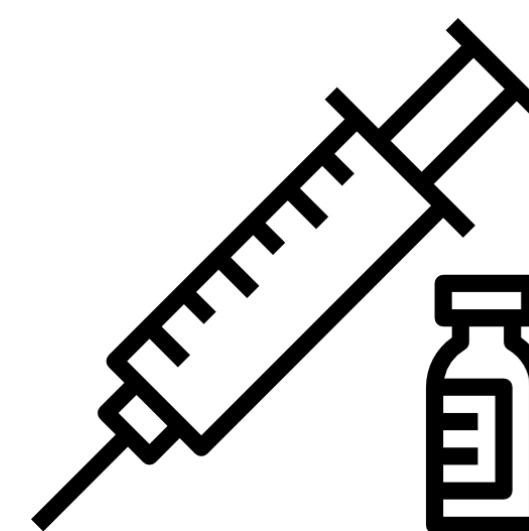
Low Fever

A sticky white or gray coating forms on the tonsils, throat, or nose. Other symptoms include hoarseness, barking cough, and skin rash. Severe disease may have swelling of the neck, abnormal heart rhythms, or paralysis.

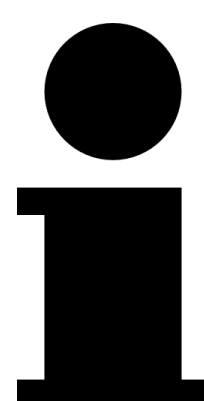
Symptoms often appear 2-7 days after the bacteria enter the body, but can be up to 10 days later.

## Prevention

Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent diphtheria.



## For More Information



Contact your doctor or the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-821-5821 for more information.

You can also visit [www.cdc.gov/diphtheria](http://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria).