

DIPHTHERIA

Definition: Diphtheria is a serious disease caused by a toxin (poison) made by bacteria. It causes a thick coating in the back of the nose or throat that makes it hard to breathe or swallow. It can be deadly. The D-TAP vaccine protects against diphtheria

Transmission: Diphtheria spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person can spread the disease for up to 2 weeks after infection

Symptoms: Diphtheria starts like a cold, with sore throat, mild fever (101 degrees or less), and chills. Next, the diphtheria toxin makes a thick coating on the back of the nose or throat. It may be blue or grayish green. The coating makes it hard to breathe or swallow.

Exposure: Diphtheria is transmitted from person to person through close contact with the discharge from an infected person's eyes, nose, throat or skin

Precautions and PPE considerations: Gloves and mask if this is suspected. Masking the patient would also be appropriate.

Treatments: People who receive the T-DAP vaccine are immune to diphtheria. There are medications available for it.

Work Guidelines: Untreated patients who are infected with the diphtheria germ may be contagious for up to four weeks. If the patient is treated appropriately, the contagious period can be limited to less than four days. The infectious disease doctor will evaluate you and establish a treatment schedule and a return to work schedule if an exposure is determined.