

Diphtheria is a disease caused by the bacteria *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* that affects the tonsils, throat, nose or skin. It is the toxin (poison) produced by the bacteria that causes the severe disease problems.

Symptoms

- Nasal diphtheria first appears similar to the common cold. If there is a fever, it is usually low-grade. Nasal discharge may contain traces of blood and possibly pus.
- If diphtheria occurs in the throat, it is called tonsillar or pharyngeal diphtheria. Symptoms include sore throat, loss of appetite, and low-grade fever. Within 24 hours a whitish-grey or bluish-white membrane begins forming in the throat.
- Laryngeal diphtheria is generally an extension of pharyngeal infection. Symptoms include fever, hoarseness, and cough. Obstruction of the airway is increased. In mild cases the membrane is coughed up in six to ten days.

Transmission

- The disease is spread by close contact with the discharges from an infected person's nose, throat, eyes and skin lesions.
- It may be spread through coughing, sneezing, or even talking.

Treatment

- A treatment called antitoxin can be given, and sometimes the antibiotics penicillin and erythromycin can be used.

Prevention

- The most effective control and prevention is through widespread routine immunization. Because there is a possibility of getting the disease twice, anybody who gets diphtheria once should get the vaccine to prevent from getting it again.

Additional Information

Each of the Tetanus and Pertussis vaccines contain vaccine to Diphtheria, there is no single vaccine for Diphtheria available.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.

