



Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

You have been in contact with someone who has an infection called diphtheria. The risk to you of getting this infection is low. We advise that you should take antibiotics to reduce your risk of developing diphtheria infection.

A member of the local Public Health team will be in contact with you.

They will:

- Check if you have any symptoms of diphtheria infection
- Arrange a swab of your nose and throat and any skin lesions you may have to test for diphtheria
- Prescribe antibiotics for you to reduce the risk of you developing diphtheria
- Check if you have been vaccinated against diphtheria and arrange additional diphtheria vaccination for you if needed.
- Advise you on what will happen next

Although the antibiotics prescribed for you reduces your risk of developing diphtheria, they do not completely eliminate the risk, so remain alert for diphtheria symptoms as described in the factsheet below. If you develop any symptoms, please seek urgent medical attention and bring this letter to show your doctor.

You should avoid contact with people who are not fully vaccinated until the test results are available, this means staying in your room and avoiding shared areas where you live.

Please read the factsheet attached which gives you information about diphtheria.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. *[insert name]*
Consultant in Public Health Medicine



Diphtheria Factsheet

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious infection that usually begins with a sore throat and can cause breathing problems. Occasionally it can affect the skin.

What are the signs and symptoms of diphtheria?

The most common symptoms of are:

- Throat: sore throat, loss of appetite, and slight fever, swelling of neck, difficulty breathing
- Nose: nasal discharge and superficial ulceration or sores
- Skin: sores and shallow ulcers

How serious is the disease?

Diphtheria can be fatal - between 5% and 10% of diphtheria patients die, even if properly treated. If untreated, the disease claims even more lives.

How is diphtheria diagnosed and treated?

If you have any of the above symptoms you need to be seen by a doctor for testing and treatment.

The doctor or nurse will take a swab to test for the diphtheria. Treatment includes antibiotics and, if diphtheria is confirmed, anti-toxin may be required.

How is diphtheria spread?

Diphtheria is spread by contact with respiratory droplets from the throat of a person with diphtheria or one who carries the bacteria, through coughing and sneezing. Occasionally, spread may also occur through touching objects which have been in contact with skins sores or ulcers of infected people.

How is diphtheria prevented?

The most effective way of preventing diphtheria is to get the vaccine

How many doses of diphtheria vaccine are recommended?

In Ireland, at least 5 doses of vaccine containing diphtheria toxoid are recommended.

Additional boosters may be needed to maintain immunity for those at particular risk of infection.

Further information on vaccination is available from the [HSE National Immunisation Office](#) which provides up-to-date information about HSE immunisation programmes for children, adults and healthcare professionals in Ireland.