



Diphtheria Vaccination Information Leaflet for Close Contacts

Why am I being offered this vaccine?

You are being offered this vaccine because you are a close contact of someone who has an infection called diphtheria. Diphtheria vaccination is the best way to protect against diphtheria infection.

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease that usually begins with a sore throat and can quickly cause breathing problems. It can damage the heart and nervous system and, in severe cases, it can kill. The same bacteria can also cause ulcers on the skin, particularly the legs.

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 skin sores or ulcers of infected people.

How is diphtheria prevented?

Diphtheria vaccination is given as part of the childhood immunisation programme worldwide. The vaccine is very effective and safe and so the disease is now rare in Ireland. In countries where immunisation services have been disrupted, diphtheria infection is more common.

Will the vaccine stop me developing diphtheria?

You are now being offered diphtheria vaccination because you are a close contact of a person who has diphtheria infection. This vaccine also provides important protection against polio and tetanus infections.

If you have already been fully vaccinated against diphtheria when you were a child, one dose of vaccine is recommended now to boost your protection and is very safe.

If you have not been fully vaccinated as a child (or you are not sure if you have been fully vaccinated), you are recommended to receive one dose of vaccine now. This vaccination will help to start your protection against diphtheria, but it is also important that you receive more doses of vaccine later to complete the vaccination course and ensure that you are fully protected.



Is there anyone who cannot have the vaccine?

There are very few reasons why you cannot receive the vaccine. You should not get the vaccine if you have had a very severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous vaccine or to any part of the vaccine. Please tell the Public Health or medical Team who are organising the vaccination if this has happened to you.

Are there any side effects from the vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild to moderate, short-term, and not everyone gets them.

You may have some redness, swelling or tenderness in the arm where you had the injection, or you may have a temperature or a headache. These symptoms will usually disappear in a few days.

Serious side effects, like a severe allergic reaction, are extremely rare. Your vaccinator is trained to treat very rare serious allergic reactions.

If you are very unwell after getting a vaccine, you may be sick for some other reason. If you are concerned, please seek medical advice.