



Date:

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to inform you that a person who lives at [*insert centre name*] has been diagnosed with an infection called diphtheria. You are not a close contact so your risk of getting this infection is very low.

While your risk of infection is small, if you have any symptoms of diphtheria it is important that you are seen by a doctor as soon as possible. This is so that you can be tested for diphtheria and treated if needed. Please read the diphtheria factsheet at the end of this letter, which gives information about diphtheria. If you are worried that you or someone close to you has diphtheria, please seek urgent medical attention and bring this letter to show your doctor.

It is important that you are up to date with the vaccinations that are recommended in Ireland. If you are registered with a GP/family doctor practice, they should be able to advise you about vaccinations you might need. This is especially important if you are unvaccinated or are unsure of what vaccines you have already received.

If you do not have a GP/family doctor you can find information on the Irish vaccination schedule [here](#) and ask for advice from members of the HSE team that visit your accommodation centre.

Yours sincerely,

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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 skin 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.