



Thematic Key Messages on Diphtheria

Diphtheria is caused by bacteria (*Corynebacterium diphtheria*). It is a serious disease that can cause death, especially in children, if it is not treated

Diphtheria causes severe swelling of the nose and throat. In some children the swelling and infection can become so severe they cannot breathe, this can kill them.

If you, one of your family or anybody in your neighbourhood is unwell with any of the symptoms below, immediately take the patient to the nearest health facility:

- Difficulty Swallowing
- Sore throat (young children may cry when they try and swallow, or not want to eat)
- Fever (body feels warm)
- Hoarseness of voice
- Difficulty breathing
- Coughing or sneezing
- Swelling of neck
- Thick, grey coating formed in the nose, throat and tongue

Treatment

Diphtheria can be treated, visit your nearest health center if you or your loved ones have symptoms

Isolation

- Isolation and treatment is key to ensure people who are sick get better quickly and do not spread the disease to others
- If children are isolated, one caregiver can accompany every patient. The caregiver will be given protection (prophylaxis) for diphtheria.
- Visitors cannot be allowed because the hospital is very full of sick patients, they may also be at risk of contracting diphtheria while visiting
- If someone is isolated, the care taker will have information to give updates to loved ones on the patients' health condition

Protection and Prevention

Completing the three doses of vaccination is the best way to prevent diphtheria

If your loved one is in the health center for diphtheria, you may be carrying and spreading the disease even if you are feeling well.

You are at risk of spreading diphtheria even if you are feeling well if:

- You live in a house with someone who has diphtheria
- You had direct contact with someone who has diphtheria for more than one hour

To protect yourself and the people around you, you can

- Be given an injection with stronger medicine which is only given one time and protects you for seven days
- Take antibiotics for seven days once or four times every day

7 days antibiotics

- To help protect yourself and your community, you can take antibiotic medicines every day for seven days.
- The antibiotics are free and you must only take them if they are prescribed to you by your health care center
- Follow the instructions of your health care provider to ensure protection
- Only take the antibiotics that they gave you in the health care center
- If you do not take your antibiotics as directed by the health care worker, you could make your family and others sick with diphtheria even if you are feeling fine
- Make sure to complete the antibiotics as directed even if you are feeling well
- Never share or use left-over antibiotics

Keep your distance from people who show symptoms such as coughing and sneezing, try to maintain a distance of about 1 metre if possible

Wash hands well with soap and water for at least ten seconds

Vaccination

- Vaccination is the most effective measure to protect the people who are not vaccinated against the disease, especially children.
- Wherever you live, make sure that your children are fully vaccinated – that means that they have received all three courses of vaccines, one set of vaccines every four weeks. It is very important to follow the full course of vaccines to make sure that they you are protected.
- The vaccination is FREE of charge.

- The health centers and health stations are open from XX to XX.

Adverse Effects Following Immunization

This vaccine is one of the safest vaccines available. It is normal for your child to experience some of these symptoms following vaccination

- Redness, warmth, swelling, tenderness, itching, pain, and rash on the part that was injected
- Fever
- Mild Drowsiness
- Mild Irritability

If this continues for more than a day, please go to your nearest health care center

Contact Tracing

- A contact is someone who
 - lives in a house with someone who has diphtheria
 - had direct contact (within 1 meter) with someone who has diphtheria for more than one hour
- Contact tracing is finding every contact and following up with their condition for seven days.
- If the contact develops a swollen neck, fever or other diphtheria symptoms, they should be Refer to nearest health facility for further treatment
- Contact tracing helps find new cases quickly so they can be isolated and treated, stopping the spread of diphtheria.
- Close contacts should restrict their movement by not going to areas of mass gathering for at least 48 hours of start of chemo-prophylaxis.

KEY MESSAGES for Health Care Workers to deliver:

Key message #1: Diphtheria is a serious disease that can cause death in some cases if you do not seek help from your nearest health center.

Key message #2: If you develop any of the symptoms of diphtheria then seek help at your nearest health care center. All medical services are free. Diphtheria can be cured if you go to the health centre don't wait until it's too late

Key message #3: Protect your family and your community from diphtheria by getting vaccinated and taking the injection or medicines prescribed.

Key message #4: It is normal for your child to have slight fever after receiving the vaccine this is their body forming defence against the real disease (remove is you don't think this will work for social mobilizers)

Key message #5: Isolation and treatment is very important to ensure people who are sick get better quickly and do not spread the disease to others

Annex III: Key messages for volunteers of Contact Tracing

What is Diphtheria?

Diphtheria is caused by bacteria that can harm or destroy human body tissues and organs. One type of diphtheria affects the throat and sometimes the tonsils. Diphtheria spreads easily between persons through direct contact. It can be transmitted through respiratory droplets, like from coughing or sneezing.

Vaccine is the most effective measure to protect the people who are not vaccinated against the disease, especially children.

Who are contacts?

- **People living in the same household**
- **All close relatives/friends who visited the family and spent more than an hour in the house with the source case**
- **Fellow students and care taker if the case was at a learning, child friendly center**
- **Other girls/ women if the case was at a girls/women friendly space or shelters**

Chemoprophylaxis and Restriction of Movement

Oral Penicillin/ Erythromycin /Azithromycin are given to prevent diphtheria infection.

It should be given two hours after food and no food in tack for another 1-2 hours after the medication. The first dose should be given under direct supervision of the person who provides the drug.

The close contacts should restrict their movement until 48 hours after the initiation of chemoprophylaxis by not going to area of mass gathering. If the contact develops any symptom of respiratory tract infection, then he/she should seek treatment at a health center immediately.

Immunization

All close contacts including the healthcare workers in contact to the case should be immunized as per the followings schedules:

- Pentavalent vaccine (DPT-hepB-Hib) for age 6 weeks to 6 years
- Td vaccine for 7 years and above,
- Td for pregnant women instead of TT.

Only **1** dose of vaccine if documentary evidence of having completed primary vaccination schedule is available and **3** doses if no documented evidence: at least 4 weeks interval between each dose

Personal Hygiene

Ensure adequate precautions are taken for personal protection in the field

- Don't shake hands or make body contacts during greetings with anyone in the field
- Maintain a distance of more than one meter from suspected cases with fever and sore throat
- Use personal protective equipment if you need to be in very close contact of the suspected case (less than 1 meter)
- Wash hand with soap when you have a contact with any suspected case of fever and sore-throat

When to refer

Any contacts or suspected cases identified through active case search presenting with fever and sore-throat should be referred to the health facility.

Annex IV: Addressing Rumours

Rumor #1: 'If my child is feeling fine then he/she does not need to have more than one vaccine, if at all'

Possible responses:

- Discuss severity of diphtheria and consequences
- Diphtheria occurs around the world, not just in Bangladesh or in your community. This disease can be treated and can be prevented through this very effective and internationally recognized vaccine.
- The only way your child will be protected is through all three doses of the vaccine
- For young children (under 7) your child will also receive protection from other diseases, not just diphtheria (list)

Rumor #2: 'When my child receives vaccine he/she gets sick, we lose benefits and time and we may have to pay the traditional healer to fix it.'

Possible responses/strategy:

- You have to be prepared to explain what diphtheria is and how it can kill their child. You also have to explain how the vaccine works and what they must expect after taking the diphtheria vaccine. Give a timeframe of what may happen (e.g. After 1 day your child will feel...).
- If you ensure your child receives the right amount of doses at the right time he/she will be protected. When he/she is protected you save money because you do not have to take him/her to get treatment because they now they will not get diphtheria.

Rumor #3: "The vaccine is not halal"

Possible responses/strategy:

- The benefits of this vaccine outweighs the harm of diphtheria which leads to death especially if younger than fifteen. Many children around the world including Bangladesh receive the same vaccine. I understand your concern, but you must know that this vaccine is safe and effective when it is given to children in the correct doses (3 times) and within the correct time frame (every four weeks).
- Explain to the parent(s) the timeframe of vaccine efficacy and that this vaccine does not cause death. Take time to do this, be patient and express hope.

Rumor #4: "How can we trust you to take care of my child when you cannot even pronounce his/her name?"

Possible responses/strategy:

- You must involve the Maji or Rohingya community volunteers when calling the name of the children to mobilize them, because they know how to properly pronounce the child's name.

Rumor #5: 'I could lose work if I take time off to go or bring my child to the health center?'

Possible responses/strategy:

- You will not lose your work if you take time to go to the health center. You can come back to it. If your child receives the right amount of doses at the right time he/she will be protected. When he/she is protected you are saving his/her life and saving more time because you do not have to take him/her to get treatment.