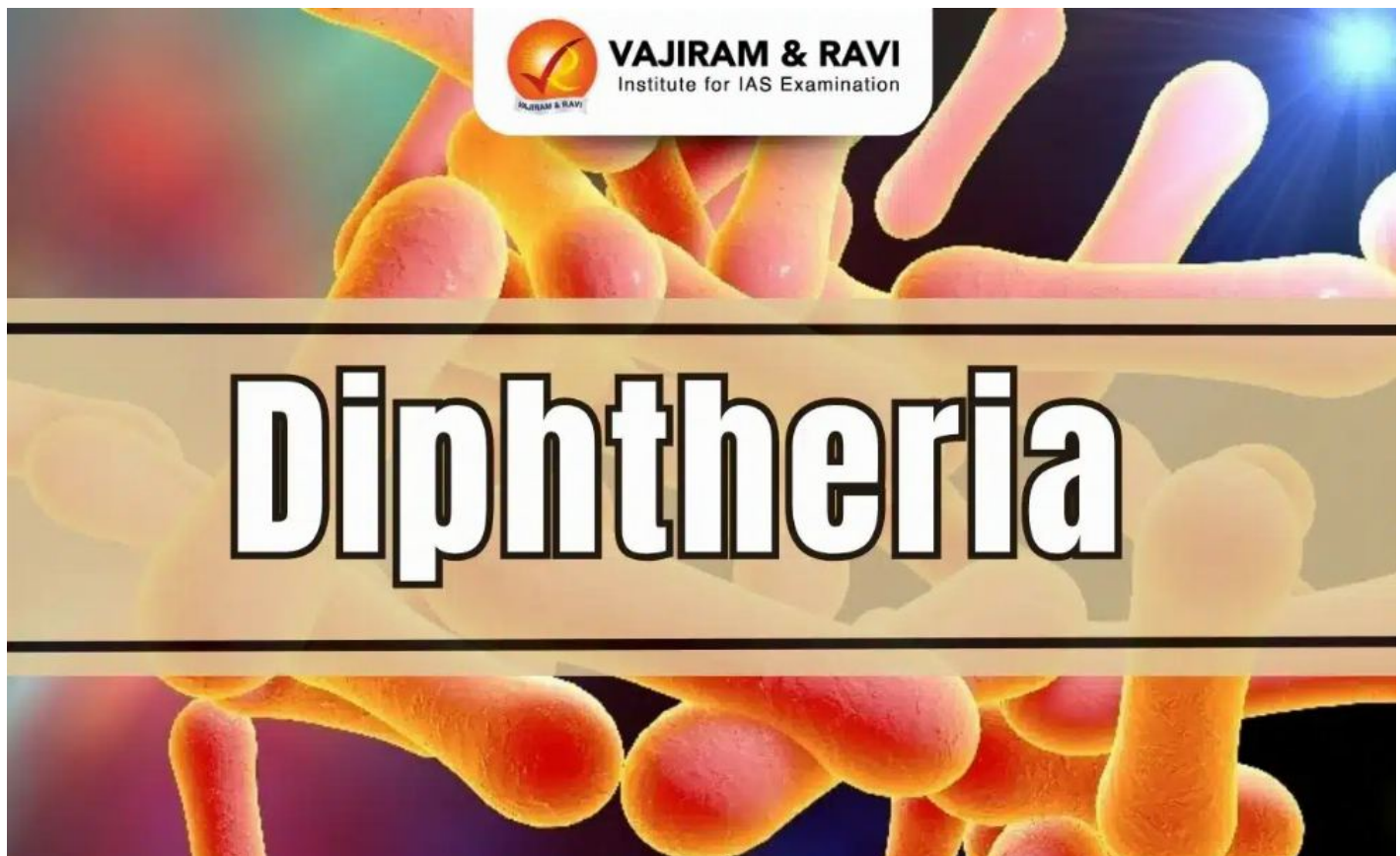


Diphtheria

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Diphtheria Latest News

After decades of being largely under control, diphtheria — a serious but vaccine-preventable disease — is making an unexpected return in parts of Australia.

About Diphtheria

- It is a **highly contagious bacterial infection** that can **attack** the **upper respiratory tract** and **less often the skin**.
- It is caused by **strains of bacteria** called **Corynebacterium diphtheriae** that **make a toxin**.
- The bacterium usually **multiplies on or near** the **surface of the throat or skin**.
- There are **two main types** of diphtheria:
 - **Classical respiratory diphtheria**: It may **affect** your **nose, throat, tonsils, or larynx** (voice box). It's the **most common type**.
 - **Skin (cutaneous) diphtheria**: It causes a **skin rash, sores, or blisters**. They can **appear anywhere** on your body. Cutaneous diphtheria is **more common in tropical climates**. **Overall, it's rare**.

Diphtheria Transmission

- It can spread **from person to person**, usually through **respiratory droplets**, like from coughing or sneezing.
- People can also get sick from **touching infected open sores or ulcers in case of cutaneous diphtheria**.
- **Some people may not develop disease manifestations** but can **still transmit** the bacteria to others.

Diphtheria Symptoms

- Symptoms of **respiratory diphtheria** can include:
 - **Throat pain**
 - Weakness or fatigue
 - Mild fever
 - **Swollen lymph nodes in your neck**
 - **A thick, greyish coating on the back of your throat**
 - **Problems breathing and/or swallowing**
- Symptoms of **skin diphtheria** can include:
 - Painful **open sore or ulcer**
 - **Rash with scales or peeling skin**
 - Swelling and discoloration near the sore or rash
- Diphtheria can lead to **complications**, like:
 - **Airway blockage**, which can cause suffocation
 - **Heart muscle damage** and **heart failure**
 - **Nerve damage**
 - **Kidney failure**
 - These complications **can result in death**.

Diphtheria Treatment

- **Neutralization of unbound toxin** with Diphtheria Antitoxin (DAT).
- **Antibiotics** to prevent further bacterial growth;
- Monitoring and supportive care to prevent and treat complications, e.g. airway obstruction, myocarditis.
- **Although** diphtheria can be **treated with medications, in advanced stages**, the bacterial **infection can damage the heart, kidneys and nervous system**.
- It is a **vaccine-preventable disease**, but multiple doses and booster doses are needed to produce and sustain immunity.
- **For unvaccinated individuals, without proper treatment**, diphtheria can be **fatal in around 30% of cases**, with **young children at higher risk** of dying.

Source: **IE**