

Protecting yourself against

Diphtheria

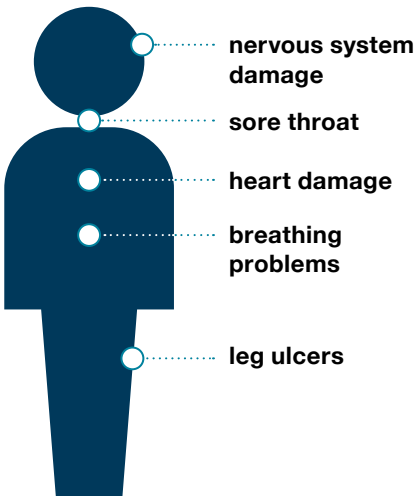


Who is being offered this extra protection?

Everyone arriving to claim asylum in the UK is currently being offered a dose of a diphtheria containing vaccine and a course of antibiotics (called azithromycin), to reduce the risk of diphtheria and some other infections. This is after a number of cases have been detected in centres for asylum seekers in both Kent and in other parts of the UK.

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 nasty ulcers on the skin, particularly the legs.



How is it spread?

Diphtheria bacteria can live in the mouth, nose, throat or skin of people with the infection. It is spread through close contact.

How is it prevented?

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

Why are we offering this?

An increase in diphtheria cases has now been detected across Europe, mainly in those who have travelled to claim asylum. It seems likely that most infections were acquired in the country of origin, or during travel to the UK, often in crowded and difficult circumstances.

To stop the infection spreading further and to protect those who may have been exposed on or during their journey we are offering a dose of vaccine and a course of antibiotics to all arrivals.



Will this stop me developing diphtheria?

For some people this vaccine may make up for missing a dose earlier in life. This dose will help to kick start your protection, but you will still need to complete the course once you are settled.

Please see the information on this page, where you should find information in your own language:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunisation-information-for-migrants

For other people this vaccine may be an extra dose. This extra dose should help to boost your protection and is very safe. The vaccine you are being given also provides important protection against polio and tetanus.

The course of antibiotics should treat diphtheria if you are carrying the bug in your throat or on your skin; it will also treat other common infections including streptococcus. The course is one tablet a day for 6 days. A syrup will be provided for children.

If you do develop symptoms of diphtheria, you may need a longer course of antibiotics and need to go to hospital. So, if you experience a fever, sore throat, or swollen neck glands please ask to see the doctor.

Is there anyone who cannot have the vaccine or the antibiotics?

There are very few reasons why you cannot receive the vaccine or the antibiotics. If you had a serious allergic reaction to a previous vaccination or antibiotics please tell a health care professional.



Are there any side effects from the vaccine?

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

Are there any side effects from the antibiotics?

Some people may feel or be sick, and suffer diarrhoea. Keep taking the medicine, but if these side effects bother you talk to a health care professional.

Where can I get more information?

Online sources of information that you may find helpful:

**NHS website:
Diphtheria**



**NHS website:
Polio**



**NHS website:
Tetanus**



**Migrant
health leaflet**



You can also report suspected side effects on the Yellow Card website or by calling 0800 731 6789 (9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or by downloading the Yellow Card app.

www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard



UK Health Security Agency