# Addressing Diphtheria

## What is the issue?

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- Diphtheria is rapidly spreading in south Indian states affecting many children due to lowering vaccination coverage.
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- India needs a better vaccination and awareness program to address lowering vaccination coverage.
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## What is Diphtheria?

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- Diphtheria is a highly infectious disease, which usually shows up as a sore throat and difficulty in breathing.
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- It spreads through contact or cough and sneeze droplets, and is caused by the bacterium Corynebacterium diphtheriae.
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- In severe cases, the toxin secreted by this bacterium kills cells in the throat.
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- If the patient isn’t treated the toxin can spread through the bloodstream hurting the heart and kidneys.
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## What is the status of the disease in India?

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- India has had a diphtheria vaccination programme since the 1980s.
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- Yet India continues to be a world leader in diphtheria today, with 3,380 cases and 177 deaths reported in 2016.

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- This year has seen worrying outbreaks in Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana, among other States.
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- Diphtheria is increasingly infecting adolescents and adults in India, though it was historically an illness of children under five.
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## What are the reasons behind the growing disease in India?

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- Under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP), all children below one year of age are supposed to get three doses of the Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTP) vaccine.
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- It is followed by two booster doses between 1-2 years and 5-6 years.
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- But coverage of the three primary doses is inadequate at 80% across the country and there is no vaccination for grown-ups.
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- Data on coverage with the two booster doses is patchy, with one study showing poor rates of around 60% and 36% for each dose, respectively, in 2006.
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## What are the reasons behind lower vaccinationcoverage?

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- Usually lower vaccination coverage is triggered by an ill-advised change in vaccination schedules and socio-economic instability among the population.
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- A review from Chennai’s National Institute of Epidemiology found low rates of vaccination among Muslim communities, one of the reasons driving outbreaks in States like Andhra Pradesh.
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- Kerala despite its high vaccination rates, has susceptible pockets for the same reason.

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- This because there are anti-vaccination sentiments seeded by few Islamic clerics in this regions.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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