



## Addressing Diphtheria

### What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Diphtheria is rapidly spreading in south Indian states affecting many children due to lowering vaccination coverage.

\n

- India needs a better vaccination and awareness program to address lowering vaccination coverage.

\n

\n\n

### What is Diphtheria?

\n\n

\n

- Diphtheria is a highly infectious disease, which usually shows up as a sore throat and difficulty in breathing.

\n

- It spreads through contact or cough and sneeze droplets, and is caused by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*.

\n

- In severe cases, the toxin secreted by this bacterium kills cells in the throat.

\n

- If the patient isn't treated the toxin can spread through the bloodstream hurting the heart and kidneys.

\n

\n\n

### What is the status of the disease in India?

\n\n

\n

- India has had a diphtheria vaccination programme since the 1980s.

- \n
- Yet India continues to be a world leader in diphtheria today, with 3,380 cases and 177 deaths reported in 2016.
- \n
- This year has seen worrying outbreaks in Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana, among other States.
- \n
- Diphtheria is increasingly infecting adolescents and adults in India, though it was historically an illness of children under five.
- \n

\n\n

### **What are the reasons behind the growing disease in India?**

\n\n

- \n
- 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.
- \n
- It is followed by two booster doses between 1-2 years and 5-6 years.
- \n

\n\n

- \n
- But coverage of the three primary doses is inadequate at 80% across the country and there is no vaccination for grown-ups.
- \n
- 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.
- \n

\n\n

### **What are the reasons behind lower vaccination coverage?**

\n\n

- \n
- Usually lower vaccination coverage is triggered by an ill-advised change in vaccination schedules and socio-economic instability among the population.
- \n
- 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.

\n

- Kerala despite its high vaccination rates, has susceptible pockets for the same reason.

\n

- This because there are anti-vaccination sentiments seeded by few Islamic clerics in this regions.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n



**IAS PARLIAMENT**  
*Information is Empowering*  
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative