

Department of Disease Control

Weekly Disease Forecast No.237_Diphtheria (24 – 30 November 2019)

From the national disease surveillance system, this year (2019) up to the present, there had been 23 diphtheria cases of which 4 had died. The highest incidence rates occurred among the infants to children less than 9 years old followed by the 10 to 14 years age groups.

Among the 83 suspected diphtheria cases reported, 23 were confirmed cases according to the national R506 disease surveillance program. The four deaths were young children aged 2-9 years old who had incomplete vaccination.



According to this week disease forecast, there is a continue risk of sporadic diphtheria in crowded places such as child day-care centers and boarding schools especially in some areas with low diphtheria vaccination coverage. The risk of diphtheria is higher during July to September and November to December.

Diphtheria is an acute bacterial infection of respiratory system which can cause mild to severe illness. Symptoms, develop 2 – 5 days after infection, include fever, sore throat, and swollen lymph glands in the neck. Severe illness presents with swollen neck and thick gray or white patch of dead tissue in the throat and tonsils caused by the bacterial toxin. Complications are blocking of the airway and absorption of the toxin into the blood stream that may cause damage to the heart, kidneys and peripheral nerves and thus can lead to death. All diphtheria suspected patients need hospital medical care immediately to save life.

Diphtheria is spread from person to person usually through respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing and close contact. Some mild cases can transmit the bacteria to people around them. Some might be contagious for up to two months. Recover patients might not develop immunity against the disease.

The best way to prevent diphtheria is to get vaccinated. The Department of Disease Control strongly advises parents to bring their children aged 2 months old onward to get the complete vaccination series against diphtheria (DTP vaccine) as per the MOPH recommended immunization schedule. Pregnant women should also get the dT vaccine as per the MOPH schedule.

For queries or additional information, please call DDC hotline 1422.



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