

Case Definition

Confirmed Case:

Clinical illness¹ or systemic manifestations compatible with diphtheria in a person with an upper respiratory tract infection or infection at another site (e.g. wound, cutaneous) **plus** at least one of the following:

- Laboratory confirmation of infection:
 - isolation of *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* with confirmation of toxin from an appropriate clinical specimen, including the exudative membrane
OR
 - isolation of other toxigenic *Corynebacterium* species (*C. ulcerans* or *C. pseudotuberculosis*) from an appropriate clinical specimen, including the exudative membrane
OR
 - histopathologic diagnosis of diphtheria
OR
- Epidemiologic link (contact within two weeks prior to onset of symptoms) to a laboratory-confirmed case

Probable Case:

Clinical illness¹ in the absence of laboratory confirmation or epidemiologic link to a laboratory-confirmed case.

Suspect Case:

Upper respiratory tract infection (nasopharyngitis, laryngitis or tonsillitis) with or without a nasal, tonsillar, pharyngeal and/or laryngeal membrane

Clinical Evidence

Clinical illness is characterized as an upper respiratory tract infection (nasopharyngitis, laryngitis or tonsillitis) with or without an adherent nasal, tonsillar, pharyngeal and/or laryngeal membrane, plus at least one of the following:

- Gradually increasing stridor
- Cardiac (myocarditis) and/or neurologic involvement (motor and/or sensory palsies) one to six weeks after onset
- Death, with no known cause

Laboratory Comments

Isolation of *Corynebacterium* species capable of producing diphtheria toxin (*C. diphtheriae*, *C. ulcerans* or *C. pseudotuberculosis*) should be tested using the modified ELEK assay OR assay for the presence of the diphtheria *tox* gene, which, if detected, should be tested for expression of diphtheria toxin using the modified ELEK assay.

¹ See Clinical Evidence section.

Reporting Requirements

Report confirmed cases **immediately** to DHW Surveillance via Panorama and the Surveillance Inbox.

Additional Forms

None.

Additional Comments

None.