

3 **RESPIRATORY DISEASES**

a **Updated NICD diphtheria Guidelines Published**

The NICD has published updated recommendations for diphtheria diagnosis, management and public health response, available at www.nicd.ac.za. Diphtheria should be suspected in persons who present with an upper-respiratory tract illness characterised by sore throat, low-grade fever AND an adherent membrane of the nose, pharynx, tonsils, or larynx. All persons with these symptoms should be tested for diphtheria. In addition, following the outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal Province in 2015, all laboratories are requested to screen every throat and nose swab routinely for *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Guidance on sample collection and laboratory testing can be accessed at www.nicd.ac.za. From 15 March to 13 June 2015, South Africa responded to a diphtheria outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal Province, which involved 15 diphtheria cases (11 confirmed, 1 probable, 3 possible), of whom four died. This outbreak

highlighted the importance of maintaining high level of vigilance among healthcare workers for diphtheria. Suboptimal vaccination coverage rates and waning vaccine-induced immunity results in individuals (adults and children) being or becoming susceptible to diphtheria. For further clinical or laboratory enquiries, please call the NICD hotline 082 883 9920, or Ms Linda de Gouveia 011-555-0327, lindad@nicd.ac.za, or Dr Nicole Wolter 011-555-0352, nicolew@nicd.ac.za.

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