

Public Health Clinical alert

21 May 2026

ACT time-limited diphtheria vaccination program

Key information

- The ACT is implementing a time-limited vaccination program, with expanded booster recommendations and funding for eligible people, in response to the current diphtheria outbreak in northern and central Australia.
- Eligibility for the ACT-funded diphtheria vaccination program includes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and over that meet any of the following criteria:
 - Have not had a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the last 10 years, or
 - Are travelling to an [outbreak-affected area](#) and have not had a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the last 5 years.
 - Are unvaccinated or require catch-up vaccination to complete a primary course.
- Clinicians should proactively check that all patients are up to date with diphtheria vaccination and offer vaccination in line with the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#).

Background

- There is a large outbreak of diphtheria in northern and central Australia.
- Refer to the ACT Diphtheria [Public Health Clinical alert](#) (April 2026) for further information on notification and management of suspected or confirmed cases of diphtheria.
- For the latest report on the diphtheria outbreak epidemiology and affected areas, refer to [Diphtheria | Australian Centre for Disease Control](#).

Vaccination

- The ACT Government is funding acellular diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (dTpa) vaccine for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and over who are not otherwise eligible under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).
- Healthcare providers are recommended to proactively check the vaccination history for all patients, particularly individuals travelling to outbreak-affected areas, and offer appropriate vaccinations for those who are not up to date.
- Refer to Table 1 for a summary of diphtheria vaccine recommendations and program eligibility.

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dTpa ordering

- Immunisation providers can order dTpa for the program using the online Vaccine Order Form. The [ACT Immunisation Schedule](#) will be updated in the coming days to reflect the new ACT-funded eligibility. Ensure you select the appropriate funding type when ordering. Stock will arrive on your next scheduled delivery date once ordered.
- Do not delay vaccination. If required, use available dTpa stock for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people eligible under the ACT-funded program and contact the Immunisation Section to organise replacement vaccine.
- The availability of ACT-funded diphtheria vaccine will be dependent on the national progression of the outbreak. Further communication will be provided regarding program cessation.
- Please contact the ACT HCSD Immunisation Section on 5124 9800 or via email at immunisation@act.gov.au for any queries.

Resources

[Diphtheria | The Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)

Issued 21 May 2026 by:

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Table 1. Diphtheria-containing vaccination recommendations and program eligibility

ACT Time limited diphtheria vaccination program (dTpa)	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and over who meet any of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have not had a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the last 10 years• Are travelling to an outbreak-affected area and have not had a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the last 5 years<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ See https://www.cdc.gov.au/diseases/diphtheria for information on outbreak affected areas• Are unvaccinated or require catch-up vaccination to complete primary course.
NIP eligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children: recommended a 5-dose primary course of a diphtheria-toxoid vaccine at 2, 4, 6 and 18 months, and 4 years of age• Adolescents: recommended a booster at 11-13 years of age (usually offered to year 7 students across all government and non-government high schools in the ACT)• Catch-up vaccination for people up to 19 years of age• In pregnancy: a single diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine is recommended in every pregnancy (between 20 and 32 weeks gestation)
Private	<p>People who have not had a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the last 10 years who meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults aged 50 years• Adults aged ≥ 65 years (for protection against pertussis)• Travelers to countries with limited access to health services <p>People who have not had a diphtheria-containing vaccine in the last 5 years that meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-Indigenous travelers to an outbreak affected area• Travelers to countries with a high risk of diphtheria (see Diphtheria The Australian Immunisation Handbook)