

Time-limited diphtheria outbreak response vaccination program

Advice for Aboriginal Medical Services and General Practitioners

7 May 2026

A diphtheria outbreak in Northern and Central Australia is ongoing

- NSW Health is implementing a targeted vaccination response to the current diphtheria outbreak in northern and central Australia.
- Refer to the *NSW Health Clinician Alert – Diphtheria* for further information at: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Documents/diphtheria-clinician-alert-apr26.pdf>
- NSW Health is funding Boostrix vaccine for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are not eligible under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).
- For the latest report on the outbreak epidemiology follow the links from: <https://www.cdc.gov.au/resources/collections/diphtheria-australia-epidemiological-updates>

Ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients are up-to-date with diphtheria vaccinations

- Check the diphtheria vaccination status of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.
- Offer vaccination to anyone who is eligible under the NIP or this NSW-funded outbreak program.
- The following people remain eligible for free dTpa vaccination under the NIP:
 - Children as part of the primary childhood vaccination schedule
 - Adolescents aged 12–13 years through the NSW school-based vaccination program
 - Catch-up vaccination funded to 19 years of age.
 - Pregnant women, who are eligible to receive a funded dose of dTpa between 20 and 32 weeks' gestation in every pregnancy.
- Providers should continue to refer to the current edition of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* for clinical advice, including recommended booster intervals.
- Refer to the attached table for advice on offering diphtheria-containing vaccines to your patients.

Boostrix ordering

- GPs can order Boostrix for outbreak management from the [NSW Vaccine Centre](#) using a new Boostrix vaccine special order form.
- Aboriginal Medical Services can place a routine order using the routine order form.

Please contact your local public health unit on 1300 066 055 for any queries.

Table 1 Diphtheria-containing vaccination for Aboriginal people

| Vaccination status | Action | NIP/state-funded vaccine |
|--|---|--|
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under 20 years who are unvaccinated or require catch up vaccination | Vaccinate in accordance with the NSW Immunisation Schedule/Australian Immunisation Handbook | NIP funded DTPa/dTpa containing vaccines |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and over who have not previously received 3 doses | Offer further doses to complete a primary course (3 doses) with a minimum interval of 4 weeks between doses | State-funded Boostrix |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and over who have previously received at least 3 doses with the most recent dose more than 10 years ago | Offer a booster dose of a diphtheria-containing vaccine | State-funded Boostrix |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20 years and over who have previously received at least 3 doses with the most recent dose within the last 10 years | No action | n/a |