

Diphtheria re-emerges in Western Australia

An outbreak of diphtheria has been identified in regional Western Australia, starting in December 2025, and mainly affecting Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region. A small number of cases have also been reported in the Pilbara and Goldfields regions. The risk to the broader WA community is currently considered to be low.

Diphtheria is a serious infection of the throat or skin caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* (or less commonly *Corynebacterium ulcerans*) bacteria. Some strains of the bacteria produce a toxin that can cause severe illness and may be life-threatening. Diphtheria was previously very rare in Australia due to high vaccination rates and improved living conditions – respiratory diphtheria had not been seen in WA for more than 50 years.

Diphtheria vaccines provide the best protection against severe disease. ■

STATEWIDE TOTAL 2026*

140

5-YEAR YTD AVERAGE 2022 - 2026 = 29

STATEWIDE MALE TO FEMALE RATE RATIO
(2026*)

0.6:1

RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION

STATEWIDE ABORIGINAL TO
NON-ABORIGINAL RATE RATIO (2026*)

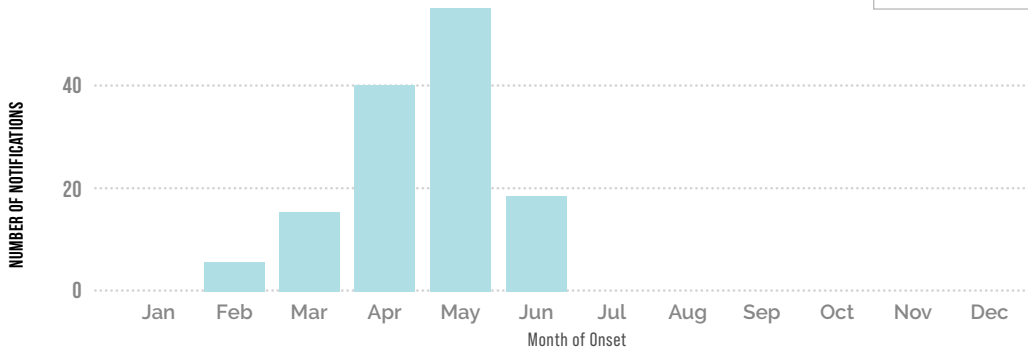
380.2:1

RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION

Statewide - Diphtheria notifications by month, 2026*

All ▾

Statewide - Diphtheria
Notifications and rates by year
2021 - 2026*



Year	Number	Rate
2021	0	0.0
2022	1	<0.05
2023	2	0.1
2024	0	0.0
2025	3	0.1
2026*	140	9.3