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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
5992	03.11.2020	03.11.2020	Banaskantha Gujarat	www.timesofindia.com/English https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/rajkot/diphtheria-raises-its-head-in-north-gujarat-again-three-kids-die-in-tharad/articleshow/79008725.cms
Title:	Diphtheria raises its head in North Gujarat again, three kids die in Banaskantha district			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU-Banaskantha, SSU-Gujarat			

In a worrying trend, North Gujarat has started recording diphtheria deaths for the second consecutive year. Since last month, at least three children have died due to diphtheria infection in Tharad taluka of Banaskantha district. Last year too Banaskantha had reported around six deaths of diphtheria suspects. Health authorities are on their toes as besides these three deaths, at least 34 diphtheria cases including 11 in Tharad alone have been reported.

“Besides Tharad, we have received cases from villages like Nano, Dipda, Savpura, Urvela and Gahanna village,” said Dr Bharmal Patel, medical officer at the district health department at Palanpur. Apart from Tharad, cases have also been reported from Deesa and other talukas, said an official.

Dr Manish Fancy, chief district health officer of Banaskantha informed that all the deceased were in the age group of five to eight years. “They were diagnosed with severe infection of diphtheria. The upper respiratory tract bacterial infection can be prevented with timely vaccination. But in some cases, our vaccination teams were

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**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

22-Sham Nath Marg, Delhi – 110 054

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driven out by the locals. We have now made it mandatory to vaccinate the kids," he said. In line with the universal immunization programme, all children below one year get three doses of diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus (DPT) vaccine which is followed by booster doses. "Earlier, villagers were opposing such vaccination drive. Now, we are strict about vaccination," said paediatrician P G Patel.

POINTER: WHAT IS DIPHTHERIA?

Diphtheria is an infectious disease caused by bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheria*. It primarily infects the throat and upper airways and produces a toxin affecting other organs. Its symptoms are sore throat, low fever and swollen glands in the neck.

In severe cases, it may cause myocarditis or peripheral neuropathy.

It makes breathing and swallowing difficult. The disease is spread through direct physical contact or from breathing in the aerosolized secretions from coughs or sneezes of infected individuals. Vaccination against diphtheria has reduced the mortality and morbidity of diphtheria dramatically.

BOX: HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Diphtheria spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Without treatment, the patient can spread the disease for around two weeks after infection.

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