

Health Advisory: Increase in Reports of Acute Flaccid Myelitis—2018

Background

The North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to receive reports of acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) cases. As of November 2, 2018, the CDC has confirmed 80 cases of AFM in 25 states. Two cases have been confirmed in North Carolina during 2018.

AFM is usually characterized by sudden onset of weakness and loss of muscle tone and reflexes in the arms and/or legs. In addition to limb weakness, some patients will experience facial droop or weakness; difficulty moving the eyes; drooping eyelids; difficulty with swallowing; or slurred speech.

The specific causes of AFM are still being investigated. There are a variety of possible causes; to date, no single pathogen has been consistently detected in spinal fluid, respiratory, stool, or blood specimens at either the CDC or state laboratories. Although initial attention was focused on enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) when AFM surveillance began in 2014, the CDC has not found a clear association between EV-D68 and AFM.

Recommendations

- Clinicians are encouraged to be alert for AFM among all age groups and to report patients with acute onset of flaccid limb weakness to North Carolina Division of Public Health (NC DPH).
- **Reports any suspected AFM case to the NC DPH epidemiologist on-call by phone at 919-733-3419 (24/7) or by secure fax at 919-733-0490.** Reporting of cases will help states and CDC monitor the occurrence of AFM and better understand factors associated with this illness.
- An AFM patient summary form is available from CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/hcp/data.html>. Additional information and submission of specimens may be requested to determine whether patients meet the clinical criterion for AFM and assess possible etiologies.

A CDC Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) call will be held on Tuesday, November 13 from 2:00-3:00 EST. A webinar link is available at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/index.asp>.

Please see the attached clinician memo for additional information on case reporting and laboratory specimen submission.

For more information:

- Memo to North Carolina clinicians (October 2018): <https://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/cd/docs/AFMClinicianGuidance2018.pdf>
- CSTE standardized case definition for AFM: <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/hcp/case-definition.html>
- AFM Investigation: <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/afm-surveillance.html>
- For Clinicians and Health Departments: <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/hcp/index.html>
- References: <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/references.html>