

August 3, 2016

CDC calls for vigilance by clinicians as cases of acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) increase among all age groups

Actions Requested

- **Recognize the symptoms of AFM.** Symptoms include sudden onset of limb weakness, loss of muscle tone, loss of reflexes, facial droop/weakness, difficulty moving the eyes, drooping eyelids, difficulty with swallowing, slurred speech, inability to pass urine, and respiratory failure. Numbness or tingling is rare though some patients have pain in their arms or legs.
- **Collect specimens from patients suspected of having AFM as early as possible** in the course of illness. CSF, whole blood, serum, peripheral blood mononuclear cells, stool, nasopharyngeal wash/swab, lower respiratory specimen (if indicated), and an oropharyngeal swab should be obtained as close to the onset of illness as possible.
- **Call us to discuss suspected cases of AFM.**

For questions, please contact our Communicable Disease staff at 360-337-5235.

Background

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is alerting clinicians to an increase in reported cases of AFM. In 2015, 20 confirmed AFM cases from 12 states were reported to CDC. In just the first six months of this year, 21 confirmed cases and 3 probable cases of AFM have been reported to CDC among persons 6 months to 64 years of age, median age 7 years. One of the probable cases was a Washington resident.

AFM is a subset of the condition known as acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and is defined by acute focal limb weakness with either MRI abnormalities in the grey matter of the spinal cord or presence of pleocytosis in CSF. AFM can be caused by a variety of viruses including poliovirus, other non-polio enteroviruses, flaviviruses, herpesviruses, and adenoviruses. National efforts are being made to improve surveillance, establish risk factors and causes, and develop potential preventive measures or therapies for this condition.

Resources

- CDC AFM Fact Sheet: <http://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/downloads/fs-acute-flaccid-myelitis.pdf>
- CDC Web page about AFM: <http://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/index.html>
- EpiTrends Acute Flaccid Myelitis: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/5100/420-002-epitrends2016-06.pdf>