

Outbreak of AFM (Acute Flaccid Myelitis)

The CDC is investigating a surge in cases of a syndrome, called AFM, which results in weakened muscles that sometimes leads to paralysis of various muscles, including limbs and those used for breathing. The majority of cases are in children and adolescents.

The first significant outbreak was in Aug -- Dec of 2014 with 120 cases throughout 34 states. In 2015 there were 21 cases in 16 states. Through September of 2016, there have been 89 cases in 33 states. Washington State currently has an outbreak of nine (9) cases, with one death. No common cause has been found. Most cases have presented in the fall and winter.

There are several groups of viruses that can cause AFM, including enteroviruses (both polio and non-polio), flaviviruses (spread by mosquitos and ticks), herpesviruses, and some adenoviruses, however, **this is very rare**. In 2014 there was an increase in Enterovirus cases associated with AFN (EV-D68) however, this year's cases do not have any one particular agent associated with the paralysis.

These viruses are spread much like a cold or flu. This includes close contact to infected individuals, contact with contaminated surfaces or objects, or by fecal-oral transmission. Handwashing with soap and water, cough and sneeze etiquette (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtnEwvUWDo0>), and frequent disinfecting of common or contaminated surfaces reduces the transmission of viruses.

What EMS should know: with AFM already in 33 states, EMS Workers should be aware of this syndrome and discuss management and transport with Medical Direction. There should be increased attention to infection control practices including the use of Standard Precautions plus any other pertinent PPE, based on contact and treatment of the patient, hand hygiene and particular attention paid to appropriate medical equipment & truck disinfection,

For more information on AFM, see <http://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/afm-surveillance.html>

This document is provided by FirstWatch as a service to prehospital and public health providers. The information has been compiled from a variety of sources such as the CDC, Health Canada and WHO. It is copyrighted, but may be freely copied and distributed as long as it remains intact. For up-to-date, EMS-specific information on emerging diseases, please visit www.firstwatch.net/hi