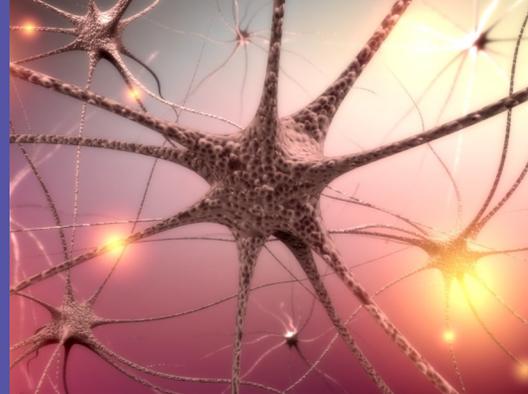


ACUTE FLACCID MYELITIS (AFM)



Acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) is also called “acute flaccid paralysis with anterior myelitis” or “polio-like syndrome.” It is a rare condition, predominantly found in children, that affects the body’s nervous system, specifically the spinal cord. AFM can be caused by some viruses that are spread by mosquitoes or are found in our environment.

What causes it?



- ▶ AFM can be caused by viruses such as enteroviruses (polio and non-polio) and flaviviruses such as West Nile Virus, Japanese Encephalitis virus, or St. Louis encephalitis virus. Other viruses that may cause AFM are herpesviruses (e.g., cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus) and adenoviruses.
- ▶ While AFM can cause your arms or legs to become weak, genetic disorders, environmental toxins, and Guillain-Barré syndrome can cause similar symptoms. Even with testing, sometimes the cause of AFM is never discovered.

What are the signs and symptoms?



- ▶ Rapidly occurring arm or leg weakness
- ▶ Decrease in muscle strength and reflexes
- ▶ Facial droop or weakness
- ▶ Loss of appetite
- ▶ Droopy eyelids
- ▶ Trouble swallowing
- ▶ Trouble moving eyes
- ▶ Slurred speech
- ▶ Respiratory failure (rarely)

What are the treatment options?



- ▶ AFM is often hard to diagnose. Providers look at the nervous system, location of muscle weakness, reflexes, and muscle firmness.
- ▶ Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), tests of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), and electromyography (EMG) nerve tests can be done to test for other illnesses or complications.
- ▶ There is no specific treatment for AFM. The treatment depends on the individual.

How can it be prevented?



- ▶ In order to prevent AFM, you must first prevent the infections that can cause it. There are vaccines to prevent some of the infections that can cause AFM (e.g., polio vaccine).
- ▶ Protecting yourself from mosquitoes can help prevent AFM-related infections such as St. Louis encephalitis, Japanese encephalitis, and West Nile Virus.
- ▶ In order to prevent enteroviruses that can cause AFM infections, it is important to wash hands frequently, stay away from people who are sick, and wash surfaces that are touched by sick people.

