

# Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM) in Children

## For California Clinicians: Recognizing, testing, and reporting

AFM is a rare but serious condition. It affects the gray matter of the spinal cord, causing muscle weakness and paralysis. AFM patients are primarily children.

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### Identify suspect AFM cases

#### Clinical features:

- Acute onset of flaccid arm or leg weakness
- Loss of muscle tone and reflexes
- Usually preceded by a febrile respiratory illness

#### Some patients may also have:

- Facial droop or weakness
- Difficulty moving eyes
- Drooping eyelids
- Difficulty swallowing
- Slurred speech
- Pain in the arms or legs



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### Collect specimens as soon as possible

If you identify a suspect AFM case, collect specimens as soon as possible and order a spinal MRI.

#### CSF



#### Serum



#### Stool



#### NP swab and OP swab in VTM



Both requested

#### Spinal MRI



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### Report suspect cases to your local health department

Report suspect AFM cases to your [local health department \(LHD\)](#) right away, regardless of lab results or MRI findings. Work with your LHD to:

- Complete the [AFM Patient Summary Form](#)
- Send MRI report and images (if possible)
- Obtain approval for laboratory testing and instructions for specimen submittal to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory (VRDL). Specialized laboratory testing is available through VRDL.

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### Contact CDPH if clinical consultation is needed

CDPH can provide clinical consultation for suspect AFM cases.

Call CDPH at 510-620-3737 or email CDPH at [VPDreport@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:VPDreport@cdph.ca.gov).

To learn more about AFM, visit the [CDPH AFM Quicksheet](#).