



Prince William  
Health District

# Prince William Health District

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[www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/PrinceWilliam](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/PrinceWilliam)  
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August 11, 2016

Dear Colleague,

We would like to ask for your assistance with reporting Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM) cases to the Prince William Health District. As you may recall, in the fall of 2014, there was an increase in the number of cases of AFM reported to local health departments. Cases were reported to have developed a sudden onset of weakness in one or more arms or legs with MRI scans that showed inflammation of the gray matter in the spinal cord. At the time, this increase coincided temporally with an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by enterovirus D68 (EV-D68). The Virginia Department of Health (VDH), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other state health departments, has been investigating this increase in cases and the possible association with EV-D68.

Another increase in the number of AFM cases reported has been identified recently. From January 1, 2016 through June 30, 2016, CDC received 36 reports of suspected AFM in persons from 20 U.S. states; a total of 21 individuals met the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist (CSTE) case definition for a confirmed case of AFM and 3 were classified as probable. During the same period in 2015, CDC received only 8 reports of suspected AFM cases, of which 5 were classified as confirmed. Among the 21 confirmed cases reported in 2016, median age was 7 years (range, 6 months – 64 years). Because of the reports of a possible epidemiological association of EVD-68 and AFM in 2014, cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) specimens available from 86% (18/21) of confirmed cases were tested at CDC; all specimens were negative for enterovirus at CDC. Pleocytosis was present in 81% (17/21) of confirmed AFM cases with a median of 50/mm<sup>3</sup> (range, 6-758/mm<sup>3</sup>).

We want to alert you to this increase in suspected AFM cases and request your assistance in reporting suspect cases to your local health department. Reporting of cases will help us monitor potential increases in this illness and better understand potential causes, risk factors, and preventive measures or therapies.

Regardless of whether enterovirus testing has been conducted, please report to Prince William Health District at 703-792-6300 in Manassas and 703-792-7300 in Woodbridge upon suspicion of any patient meeting the clinical criteria below:

- An illness with onset of acute focal limb weakness **AND**
  - a magnetic resonance image (MRI) showing spinal cord lesion largely restricted to gray matter\* and spanning one or more spinal segments, **OR**
  - cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) with pleocytosis (white blood cell count >5 cells/mm<sup>3</sup>).

\*Terms in the spinal cord MRI report such as “affecting mostly gray matter,” “affecting the anterior horn or anterior horn cells,” “affecting the central cord,” “anterior myelitis,” or “poliomyelitis” would all be consistent with this terminology. If still unsure if this criterion is met, consider consulting a neurologist or radiologist directly.  
(<http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.cste.org/resource/resmgr/2015PS/2015PSFinal/15-ID-01.pdf>).

Clinicians are asked to collect specimens from patients suspected of having AFM as early as possible in the course of illness (preferably on the day of onset of limb weakness). Local health department staff is available to assist with gathering information and can provide details on specimen collection and laboratory testing.

Recommendations for clinical management and follow up can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/downloads/acute-flaccid-myelitis.pdf>

More information can be found at the following websites:  
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/epidemiology-fact-sheets/>  
<http://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/afm-surveillance.html>  
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm>

Thank you for your assistance in this emerging situation.

Sincerely,



Alison Ansher, M.D., MPH  
Health Director