

**Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)**  
**Alabama Emergency Response Technology (ALERT) Health Alert Network (HAN)**  
**11/8/2018**  
**Acute Flaccid Myelitis**

## **Background**

Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM) is an illness characterized by acute onset of flaccid limb weakness. National surveillance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has revealed that AFM cases generally peak in the months of September and October, but can occur any time of the year. A biennial pattern has also been observed. If this pattern continues, we should expect to see an increase in AFM cases in 2018.

## **Guidance for Healthcare Providers**

AFM appears to start with a prodromal respiratory or gastrointestinal illness about one week before limb weakness onset. Pain in the neck or back often directly precedes weakness in one or more limbs, and cranial nerve findings, such as slurred speech, difficulty swallowing, and eyelid or facial droop, may occur. On exam, the weak limb(s) displays poor tone and diminished reflexes. Cerebrospinal fluid may show a lymphocytic pleocytosis and elevated protein. MRI findings in AFM cases include lesions in the central, or gray matter, of the spinal cord.

## **Reporting**

AFM was added to the list of Alabama's Notifiable conditions in August 2018. Reporters are required to report suspected cases within five days of diagnosis. Please report and send information about patients that meet the clinical criterion for AFM, regardless of any laboratory results or MRI findings.

To report suspected cases, enter in the requested information and upload supporting documents into the online [REPORT card](#). Supporting documents include the [AFM patient summary form](#), admission and discharge notes, neurology and infectious disease consult notes, MRI reports and images, vaccination history, EMG reports, and any laboratory test results.

\*Note: there is no age restriction for reporting suspected cases.\*

## **Specimen Collection and Testing**

To have specimens tested at the ADPH, Bureau of Clinical Laboratories (BCL), complete a [requisition form](#) for each specimen and test ordered and send to:

Bureau of Clinical Laboratories, EID  
8140 AUM Drive  
Montgomery, AL 36117

- Specific instructions on collection by specimen type can be found in the [AFM Specimen Collection and Shipping flyer](#).
- For surveillance and reporting questions, contact the ADPH, Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division at (334) 206-5971.
- For medical consultation, email the CDC AFM team at [AFMinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:AFMinfo@cdc.gov).
- A [job aid for clinicians](#) outlines the AFM investigation process.