



Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP)

What is acute flaccid paralysis (AFP)?

Acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) is an abnormal condition characterized by the weakening or the loss of muscle tone.

What are the symptoms?

Rapid onset of weakness or paralysis, characterized as flaccid without other obvious causes (e.g., trauma), in children less than 15 years old.

The most common feature of AFP associated with paralytic polio is its asymmetric distribution (not affecting both sides equally), which affects some muscle groups while not others, with fever present at onset.

The most common pattern involves one leg only, or one arm, although this occurs less often. It is less common for both legs or both arms to be affected.

AFP caused by Guillain-Barré Syndrome may present as symmetrical paralysis and may progress for up to 10 days.

What causes AFP?

AFP can be caused by a number of different pathogens or conditions.

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), an immune system disorder, is the most common cause of AFP in Canada.

How is it spread?

It depends on the cause of the condition.

How is AFP diagnosed?

Laboratory testing is used to rule out poliomyelitis or to determine what is causing AFP. Your healthcare provider will also do other diagnostic testing as needed.

How is AFP treated and managed?

Your health care provider will provide treatment based on the cause of your condition. Immediate case investigation and specimen collection is important to rule out polio, maintain Canada's polio-free status, and determine the source of infection.

Call the Communicable Disease Team: ext. 8809



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