



# Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP)

## ***What is acute flaccid paralysis (AFP)?***

Acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) is an extremely rare condition that causes sudden onset of muscle weakness, loss of muscle tone and reflexes. There will be no obvious cause for the symptoms.

## ***What are the symptoms?***

The symptoms depend on what is causing the illness however generally there is a quick onset of muscle weakness or paralysis usually in children less than 15 years old. The weakness lasts for a longer period of time.

The condition usually involves one leg or one arm. It is less common for both legs and arms to be affected. Some people may also have facial droop or weakness, difficulty moving their eyes or swallowing and slurred speech.

## ***What causes AFP?***

AFP can be caused by a number of different pathogens or conditions including viruses, bacteria, autoimmune conditions, and exposure to various toxins. Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), an autoimmune disorder, is the most common cause of AFP in Canada.

## ***How is it spread?***

It depends on what is causing the condition.

## ***How is AFP diagnosed?***

Laboratory testing is used 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.

## ***Why are we concerned about AFP?***

As AFP is a characteristic of the vaccine-preventable disease polio, the purpose of determining what is causing AFP is to rule out the possibility of poliovirus infection. Canada was declared polio-free in 1994 however, active monitoring for possible cases is crucial to ensuring the safety of all Canadians.

For information call Infectious Diseases: ext. 8809.



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