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August 29, 2023

Dear Provider:

Acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) is an uncommon but serious neurologic condition that peaks August through November and primarily afflicts young children. Since 2014, CDC and local public health partners have monitored and investigated AFM confirming 729 cases nationwide. Non-polio enteroviruses, particularly EV-D68, are likely responsible for increased case counts in some years but Public Health continues to look for all possible risk factors and causes, as well as the spectrum of illness and outcomes. This letter is to encourage you to consider AFM in patients with acute onset of flaccid weakness and to provide guidance for reporting and specimen collection.

AFM is characterized by acute onset of flaccid limb weakness and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) showing lesions in the gray matter of the spinal cord. It appears to start with a febrile illness 1 to 2 weeks before onset of acute flaccid limb weakness and a respiratory or gastrointestinal illness (GI) with symptoms of fever, rhinorrhea, cough, vomiting or diarrhea. 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.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) Acute Communicable Disease Control Program (ACDC) recommendations for providers:

- ✓ Report all patients with onset of acute flaccid limb weakness to LAC DPH within 24 hours, regardless of age or laboratory and MRI findings
- ✓ Collect CSF, respiratory, serum, and stool specimens as early as possible and store until testing is approved by LAC DPH

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For all patients with sudden onset of flaccid limb weakness, we urge you to promptly report to the LAC DPH by phone:

- Weekdays 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.: call 213-240-7941
- After-hours: call 213-974-1234 and ask for the physician on call

Collect cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), respiratory, serum, and stool specimens as early as possible and preferably on the day of onset of limb weakness. Ask the laboratory to hold them until specimen testing is approved. Early specimens have the best chance to yield a cause. For additional guidance on reporting a suspect AFM case and specimen collection, please visit our webpage <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Diseases/AFMReporting.htm>

For AFM questions, or to notify us of any patients who you are evaluating for acute onset of flaccid limb weakness, you may call the LAC DPH, ACDC at 213-240-7941 or email the ACDC AFM team at acdcvector@ph.lacounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Sharon Balter, M.D., M.F.A.
Director, Communicable Disease Control and Prevention

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