

ACUTE FLACCID PARALYSIS

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 causes AFP?

AFP can be caused by a number of different pathogens or conditions, including but not limited to, poliovirus, West Nile virus infection, peripheral neuropathy, acute non-bacterial meningitis and tick paralysis. Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), which is an immune system disorder, is the most common cause of AFP in Canada.

What are the symptoms of AFP?

Rapid onset of weakness or paralysis characterized as flaccid without other obvious causes (e.g., trauma).

- AFP associated with paralytic polio causes:
 - Asymmetric distribution (not affecting both sides equally), affecting some muscle groups
 - Fever present at onset
 - Most common pattern involves one leg only, or one arm
 - 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.

How does AFP spread?

Transmission of AFP depends on the cause of the condition.

How is AFP diagnosed?

In addition to assessing the symptoms described above, laboratory testing may be used to support or rule out paralytic polio. A healthcare provider will complete other diagnostic testing as needed.

How is AFP treated and managed?

A healthcare provider will provide treatment based on the cause of the condition. Immediate case investigation and specimen collection is important to rule out polio and determine the source of infection.

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