



Yakima Health District

News Release

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One suspected case of acute flaccid myelitis in Yakima, WA

YAKIMA, WA – The Washington Department of Health (DOH) has notified local public health officials that there is one suspected case of [acute flaccid myelitis](#) (AFM) in Yakima, WA. The Washington Department of Health is working with experts in neurology from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for confirmation. The Department of Health sent a notice to public health departments for distribution to healthcare providers across the state to be alert for other suspected AFM cases.

This investigation is ongoing throughout the state of Washington as DOH and four other local public health agencies are investigating reports of eight children hospitalized for sudden onset of paralysis of one or more limbs. Currently, there is one confirmed case, and seven suspected cases of AFM across Washington State. All cases are among children and youth who all reportedly had symptoms of a respiratory illness in the week prior to developing symptoms of AFM.

The children are being evaluated for AFM, a rare condition that affects the nervous system, specifically the spinal cord. Symptoms typically include sudden weakness in one or more arms or legs, along with loss of muscle tone and decreased or absent reflexes. AFM can cause a range of types and severity of symptoms, but the commonality among them is a loss of strength or movement in one or more arms or legs. The cause of any individual case of AFM can be hard to determine, and often, no cause is found. CDC specialists will make the final determination if these cases are AFM.

Dr. Teresa Everson, Health Officer for the Yakima Health District said, “We have not yet found any clear connection or common source of illness for these cases, and the state Department of Health will continue to work closely with the CDC and local health agencies, providing new information as it is available. For now, cases appear to be unrelated.”

Some viruses and germs have been linked to AFM, including common germs that can cause colds and sore throats, and respiratory infections. It can also be caused by poliovirus and non-polio enteroviruses, mosquito-borne viruses (such as West Nile virus or Zika virus) and possibly by non-infectious conditions.



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While there are no specific recommendations for avoiding AFM, you can help protect yourself from some of its known causes by, washing your hands often with soap and water, avoiding close contact with sick people, and cleaning surfaces with a disinfectant, especially those that a sick person has touched. Staying updated on recommended immunizations is also important to avoid vaccine preventable illnesses.

AFM History in Washington State

In 2016 there was a cluster of nine cases of AFM in Washington State. In 2017 there were three cases, and since the beginning of 2018 there has been one case in the state. For more [information on AFM](#), visit the CDC website. From January 1st to September 30th, a total of 38 people in 16 states have been confirmed to have AFM. Most of these illnesses have been in children.

Additional Yakima Health District Information Sources

The [Yakima Health District \(YHD\) website](#) is your source for health updates related to Yakima County. Find the [YHD on Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#). Sign up for general Yakima Health District and County [alerts](#). If you are a health provider, sign up for [health provider specific communications](#) at the [NEW Provider Resource webpage](#).

Washington Department of Health Information Sources

The DOH [website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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