



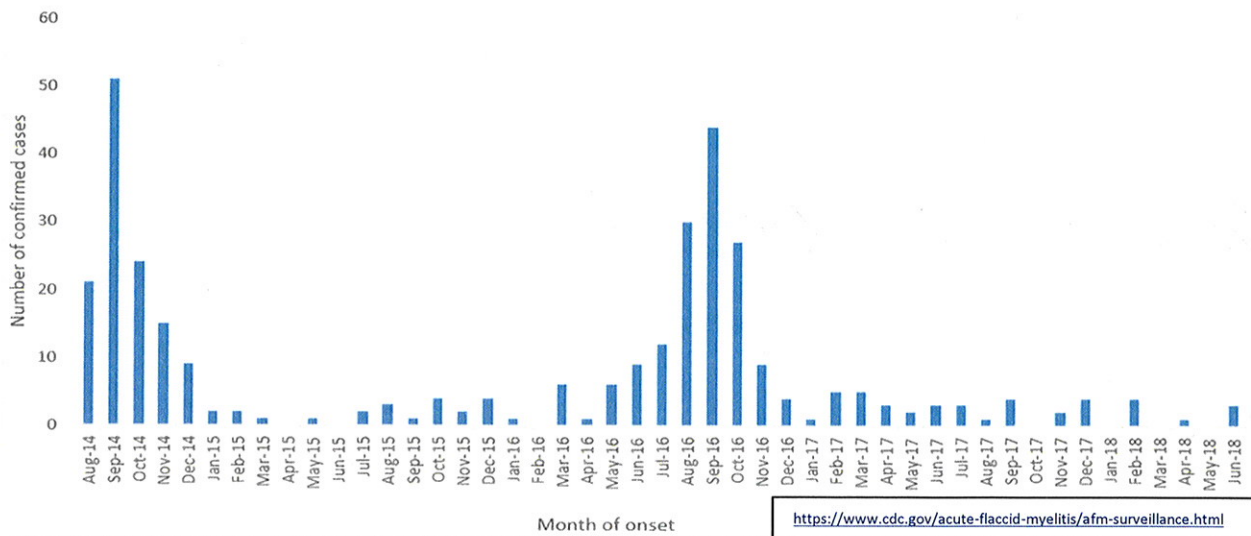
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
CITY OF CHICAGO

September 2018

Dear Provider,

Acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) is an illness characterized by acute onset of flaccid limb weakness and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) showing lesions in the gray matter of the spinal cord. AFM has been under investigation by health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the past 4 years. Surveillance has shown us that AFM cases generally peak in the months of September and October (see the figure below). A biennial pattern has been observed, with the majority of cases reported in 2014 and 2016, and smaller numbers reported in 2015 and 2017. If this pattern continues, we should expect to see an increase in AFM cases in 2018. We are sending this letter to encourage you to be aware of the symptoms of AFM, and to provide some resources to help with the identification and reporting of suspected AFM cases and specimen collection.

Number of confirmed U.S. AFM cases reported to CDC by month of onset, August 2014 - June 2018<sup>^\*†</sup>



AFM appears to start with a prodromal respiratory or gastrointestinal illness about 1 week before limb weakness onset. 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. Since AFM is a relatively new condition, we need information on all patients to help us better understand the spectrum of illness, and all possible causes, risk factors, and outcomes for AFM. We ask you to send all information about patients that meet the clinical criterion for AFM (sudden onset of flaccid limb weakness) to the Chicago Department of Public Health.

**Information should be sent on patients who meet the clinical criterion regardless of any laboratory results or MRI findings.** Note there is no age restriction for reporting suspected cases. The case definition includes people of all ages to allow us to collect information on the full spectrum of the condition in both children and adults. For more information about the case definition for AFM, please see <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/hcp/case-definition.html>.

Please visit <https://www.chicagohan.org/afm> for additional resources including a clinician job aid to walk you through the process of reporting a suspected AFM patient, specimen collection, storage, and shipping.

For clinical questions, please call Dr. Marielle Fricchione at (312) 746-5382 or email [Marielle.Fricchione@cityofchicago.org](mailto:Marielle.Fricchione@cityofchicago.org). To notify us of any patients who you are evaluating for acute onset of flaccid limb weakness, please call **(312) 743-9000**.

Thank you for your attention to this emerging public health matter,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marielle Fricchione MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Marielle Fricchione, Immunization Program Medical Director  
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