

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
October 17, 2018

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### **Possible Case of Acute Flaccid Myelitis Reported to the North Dakota Department of Health**

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is investigating a report of acute flaccid myelitis (AFM) in a North Dakota child. This is the first report of potential AFM to the NDDoH.

AFM is a rare but serious condition that affects the nervous system, causing muscles to weaken. It can follow a viral infection, but environmental and genetic factors may also contribute to its development. For reasons not fully understood, AFM affects mainly children. AFM symptoms include sudden muscle weakness in the arms or legs, sometimes following a respiratory illness. Other symptoms may include:

- Neck weakness or stiffness
- Drooping eyelids or a facial droop
- Difficulty swallowing or slurred speech

The NDDoH is working with the child's health care providers to gather information about the case and will be sharing information with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in order to determine if this individual does have AFM. This confirmation may take weeks.

Because AFM can develop as a result of a viral infection, the NDDoH recommends that everyone take basic steps to avoid infections and stay healthy:

- Wash your hands frequently to limit your exposure to germs.
- Cover your cough or sneeze.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Stay up-to-date on vaccinations.

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Potential symptoms of AFM (for example, if someone is not using an arm), should be reported to the individual's health care provider as soon as possible. AFM can be diagnosed by examining a person's nervous system, taking an MRI scan and testing cerebral spinal fluid. It is important that tests are done as soon as possible after someone develops symptoms. While there is no specific treatment for AFM, doctors may recommend certain interventions on a case-by-case basis.

For more information about AFM, please contact Jill Baber with the NDDoH at 701.328.2378.

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