



Appleton Health Department
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Dear Parent/Guardian:

The Appleton Area School District and Appleton Health Department have been made aware that a child that attends Ferber Elementary School is hospitalized with an illness that is being investigated as a possible case of Acute Flaccid Myelitis (AFM). AFM is a rare but serious condition that can cause sudden onset of arm or leg weakness. Some AFM cases also experience facial droop, difficulty moving their eyes, drooping eyelids, or difficulty with swallowing or speaking.

Currently the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state health departments are investigating an increase of AFM cases nationwide, which you may have heard about in the news. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health (DPH) has confirmed two cases of AFM in Wisconsin residents during 2018 and is actively investigating all reported suspect cases with clinicians and health departments statewide.

AFM can result from a variety of causes, including viruses, environmental toxins, and genetic disorders. AFM is often challenging to diagnose because it shares many of the same symptoms as other neurologic diseases such as transverse myelitis and Guillain-Barre syndrome. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct thorough testing and examinations necessary to differentiate between AFM and other neurologic conditions. To provide accurate and consistent diagnosis of AFM cases nationwide, review of case information and final case confirmation for all suspected AFM cases is performed by experts at the CDC. This can take several weeks to get results and confirmation that a case is or is not a case of AFM. AFM is also challenging because despite extensive laboratory tests, the cause of a patient's AFM is often not identifiable.

Prevention of AFM is based on the avoidance of the viruses that can cause AFM or similar neurologic conditions such as poliovirus and non-polio enteroviruses, West Nile virus (WNV) and viruses in the same family as WNV, specifically Japanese encephalitis virus and Saint Louis encephalitis virus, and adenoviruses. Therefore, the most effective way to prevent AFM is through good hand hygiene, vaccinations against polio and the prevention of mosquitos that can carry WNV and encephalitis.

In consultation with the State Department of Health there is no additional action requested of the school district at this time. If you have questions about AFM you can visit the Wisconsin Department of Health Website at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/afm.htm> and the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/acute-flaccid-myelitis/references.html>.

In addition, you can contact the Appleton Health Department and speak to a public health nurse at 832-6429, Extension 5.