

Acute flaccid myelitis: Five things to know

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Acute flaccid myelitis, a syndrome with rapid muscle weakness in children, has been seen in hospitals in the United States and Canada this fall. A practice article in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)* outlines five things to know about this health issue:

- Acute flaccid myelitis is characterized by rapid-onset muscle weakness, with patients presenting with weak limbs, pain and absent reflexes
- Enteroviruses are the main cause of the disease in children
- Urgent testing should be performed, including infectious workup and neuroimaging, and suspected cases should be reported to the Public Health Agency of Canada
- Acute flaccid myelitis can progress rapidly and should be managed as a medical emergency
- It often results in persistent health deficits 4-6 months after detection, with less than one-fifth of children making a full recovery, and 8%-14% needing assistive devices to walk or being completely dependent on caregivers.

More information: *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2018).
www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.181442

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