



Safety Topic: Seasonal Influenza & COVID-19

While seasonal influenza (flu) viruses are detected year-round in the United States, flu viruses are most common during the fall and winter. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons varies, but influenza activity often begins to increase in October. Most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although significant activity can last as late as May

Take action to protect yourself. According to the CDC, getting a flu vaccine is more important than ever to protect yourself, your family and your community from flu. A flu vaccine this season can also help reduce the burden on our healthcare systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and save medical resources for care of COVID-19 patients.

Flu and COVID-19 FAQs

What is the difference between influenza (flu) and COVID-19?

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a coronavirus first identified in 2019, and flu is caused by infection with influenza viruses.

COVID-19 seems to spread more easily than flu. However, as more people become fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 should slow down. More information is available about COVID-19 vaccines and how well they work.

Can I have flu and COVID-19 at the same time?

Yes. It is possible have flu, as well as other respiratory illnesses, and COVID-19 at the same time. Some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, making it hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Diagnostic testing can help determine if you are sick with flu or COVID-19.

Signs and Symptoms

Similarities:

Both COVID-19 and flu can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe symptoms. Common symptoms that COVID-19 and flu share include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/having chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache

- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Change in or loss of taste or smell, although this is more frequent with COVID-19.

How Long Symptoms Appear After Exposure and Infection

Similarities:

For both COVID-19 and flu, 1 or more days can pass between when a person becomes infected and when he or she starts to experience illness symptoms.

Differences:

If a person has COVID-19, it could take them longer to experience symptoms than if they had flu.

How Long Someone Can Spread the Virus

Similarities:

For both COVID-19 and flu, it's possible to spread the virus for at least 1 day before experiencing any symptoms.

Differences:

If a person has COVID-19, they could be contagious for a longer time than if they had flu.

Vaccines

Vaccines for COVID-19 and flu are approved and/or authorized for emergency use (EUA) by FDA.

For additional resources, please visit the links below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/dotw/covid-19/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season.htm>