



The Difference Between Flu & COVID-19

Influenza (flu) & COVID-19 are contagious respiratory illnesses, but are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2 and flu is caused by influenza viruses. Some symptoms of the flu and COVID-19 are similar, so it is hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone & testing is needed to help confirm a diagnosis.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Similarities:

Both COVID-19 & the flu can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms that can range from no symptoms (asymptomatic) to severe. Common symptoms shared by COVID-19 and the flu include:

- Fever/chills
- Cough
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache

Differences:

FLU: Flu viruses can cause mild to severe illness, that include common signs and symptoms listed above.

COVID-19: Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, different from the flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell.

How Long Symptoms Appear After Exposure

Similarities:

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

Differences:

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

FLU: Typically, a person develops symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection.

COVID-19: Typically, a person develops symptoms 5 days after being infected, but symptoms can appear as early as 2 days after infection or as late as 14 days after infection, and the time range can vary.

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 may be contagious for a longer period of time than if they had flu.

FLU: Most people with flu are contagious for about 1 day before they show symptoms. Older children & adults with flu appear to be most contagious during the initial 3-4 days of their illness but many remain contagious for about 7 days. Infants & people with weakened immune systems can be contagious for even longer.

COVID-19: *How long someone can spread the virus that causes COVID-19 is still under investigation.* It's possible for people to spread the virus for about 2 days before experiencing signs or symptoms and remain contagious for at least 10 days after they first appeared. If someone is asymptomatic or their symptoms go away, it's possible to remain contagious for at least 10 days after testing positive for COVID-19.

How it Spreads

Similarities:

Both COVID-19 and Flu can spread from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). Both are spread mainly by droplets made when people with the illness (COVID-19 or flu) cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get infected by physical human contact like shaking hands or by touching a surface or object that has virus on it and then touching his or her own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Both flu virus and the virus that causes COVID-19 may be spread to others by people before they begin showing any symptoms, with very mild symptoms or asymptomatic.

Differences:

COVID-19 is more contagious among certain populations and age groups than flu and has been observed to have more superspreading events than flu. This means the virus that causes COVID-19 can quickly & easily spread to a lot of people resulting in continuous spread as time goes on.





The Difference Between Flu & COVID-19

People at High-Risk for Severe Illness

Similarities:

Both COVID-19 & flu illness can result in severe illness and complications. Those at highest risk include:

- Older adults
- People with certain underlying medical conditions
- Pregnant women

Differences:

The risk of complications for healthy children is higher for flu compared to COVID-19. *However, infants & children with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for both flu and COVID-19.*

FLU: Young children are at higher risk of severe illness from flu.

COVID-19: School-aged youth infected with COVID-19 are at higher risk of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a rare but severe complication of COVID-19.

Complications

Similarities:

Both COVID-19 and Flu can result in complications like:

- Pneumonia
- Respiratory failure
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome (fluid in lungs)
- Sepsis
- Cardiac injury (heart attacks & stroke)
- Multiple-organ failure: respiratory failure, shock, and kidney failure
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions involving the lungs, heart, nervous system, or diabetes
- Inflammation of the heart, brain, or muscle tissues
- Secondary bacterial infections (ie. Infections in people who've already been infected with flu or COVID-19)

Differences:

FLU: Most people who get flu will recover in a few days to less than two weeks, but some people will develop some complications listed above.

COVID-19: Additional complications associated with COVID-19 can include:

- Blood clots in the veins and arteries of the lungs, heart, legs or brain
- Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children

Approved Treatments

Similarities:

People at high-risk for complications or who have been hospitalized for COVID-19 or flu should seek supportive medical care to help relieve symptoms and complications.

Differences:

FLU: Prescription influenza antiviral drugs are available & FDA-approved to treat flu. People who are hospitalized with flu or at high-risk for flu complications with flu symptoms are recommended to be treated with antiviral drugs as soon as possible.

COVID-19: The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has developed guidance on treatment of COVID-19, which will be regularly updated as new evidence on treatment options emerge.

While remdesivir is an antiviral agent being explored as a treatment for COVID-19, it is only available under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). There are currently no drugs or other therapeutics approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prevent or treat COVID-19. Studies are in progress to learn more.

Vaccine

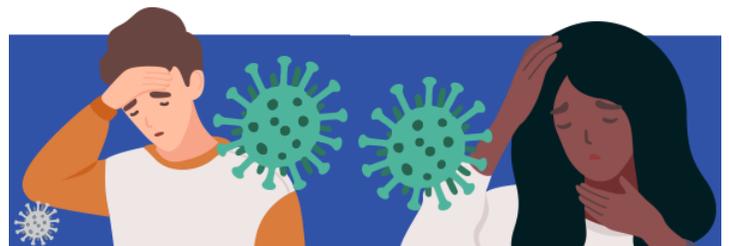
Similarities:

Vaccines for COVID-19 and flu must be approved and authorized for emergency use (EUA) by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Differences:

FLU: There are multiple FDA-licensed influenza vaccines produced annually to protect against the 3 or 4 flu viruses that scientists anticipate will circulate each year.

COVID-19: Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. Vaccine developers and other researchers and manufacturers are expediting the development of a new vaccine to prevent COVID-19.



Prevent Illness from Flu & COVID-19

Steps to Protect Yourself



Get a Flu Vaccination

- The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. Flu antiviral drugs can also be used to treat and prevent flu.

****There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.**



Wear a Face Mask

- Wear a face mask in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household to prevent viruses from spreading to others, especially when social distancing measures are difficult to do. Make sure your face mask fits snugly against your nose, mouth, and under your chin. ***Avoid placing a face mask on children younger than 2 years old.***



Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap & water for at least 20 seconds especially after being in a public place, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap & water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



STAY HOME & “SOCIAL DISTANCE” to avoid close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who may be sick or who are sick.
- Put distance between yourself and other people if these viruses are spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Steps to Protect Others



Stay home if you're sick, except to get medical care.

- Do not go to work, school, public areas in the community, or to run errands when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading your illness to others.



Cover coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth & nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow.
- Throw tissue in the trash. Wash your hands with soap & water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean and disinfect all “high-touch” surfaces every day

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

CALL AHEAD FIRST BEFORE VISITING YOUR DOCTOR

If your symptoms worsen (trouble breathing), call for help and let your healthcare provider know your symptoms. The provider will guide you through the necessary steps to keep other people from getting infected or exposed, and will allow time for their office to prepare for your arrival, if necessary. Local hospital numbers for reference are:

Laguna and Surrounding Areas

- POL Public Health Nurse (505) 552-5748
- ACL Hospital (505) 552-5300
- POL COVID-19 Hotline (505) 328-5682