

Flu or COVID-19?

Similarities and Differences Between Flu and COVID-19 Among Adults

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by an infection with the coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) and flu is caused by infections with influenza A and B viruses.

Similarities Between Flu and COVID-19

Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever/chills• Cough• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing• Fatigue• Sore throat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Runny or stuffy nose• Muscle pain• Headache• Vomiting• Diarrhea
	One or more days can pass between when a person becomes infected and symptoms appear.	
Virus Spread	It's possible to spread the viruses for at least one day <i>before</i> experiencing any symptoms. It can spread by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Person-to-person contact• In poorly ventilated spaces• Droplets or aerosols released through coughing, sneezing or talking	
High Risk for Severe Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Older adults• Persons with chronic conditions (asthma, diabetes, neurological disorders, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pregnant persons• Immunocompromised persons• Persons with metabolic disorders
Complications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pneumonia• Respiratory failure• Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)• Sepsis• Cardiac injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple-organ failure• Worsening of chronic medical conditions• Secondary bacterial infections• Blood clots
Protection	It generally takes 2 weeks after vaccination for protection against the viruses.	
Approved Treatments	Antivirals	

Differences Between Flu and COVID-19 & Related CDC Resources

Flu	COVID-19
Symptoms	
<p>Symptoms typically appear within 1-4 days after exposure.</p>  <p>Flu Symptoms & Complications</p>	<p>Symptoms typically appear 2-14 days after exposure and may include a loss of sense of smell and/or taste.</p>  <p>Symptoms of COVID-19</p>
Virus Spread	
<p>It is possible to spread the virus 1 day before symptoms appear and may be most contagious during the initial 3-4 days and remain contagious for about 7 days. People with weakened immune systems can be contagious longer.</p>  <p>Key Facts About Flu</p>  <p>How Flu Spreads</p>	<p>Likely most contagious within the first 5 days. COVID-19 is more contagious among certain populations and age groups than flu.</p>  <p>COVID-19 Isolation and Precautions</p>  <p>How Coronavirus Spreads</p>  <p>Ending Isolation and Precautions</p>
High Risk for Severe Illness	
 <p>People at Higher Risk of Flu</p>	 <p>Understanding Risk</p>
Complications	
 <p>Flu Complications</p>	 <p>Underlying Medical Conditions</p>
Protection	
<p>There are multiple influenza vaccines to protect against the 3 or 4 flu viruses expected to circulate each year.</p>  <p>Frequently Asked Flu Questions</p>	<p>Three COVID-19 vaccines are available in the U.S. People ages 5 years and older should receive one updated COVID vaccination if it has been at least 2 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose.</p>  <p>Vaccines for COVID-19</p>
Approved Treatments	
 <p>What You Should Know About Flu Antiviral Drugs</p>	<p>Monoclonal antibodies</p>  <p>COVID-19 Treatments and Medications</p>