



The Flu and COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Preventing the Flu During the Coronavirus Pandemic

This year's flu season marks an important event in healthcare due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It's now more important than ever to make sure your patients (six months and older) get a flu vaccine. While the flu vaccine will not protect them from COVID-19, it can reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death.



The Flu and COVID-19: Frequently Asked Questions

When should members get a flu shot?

Members should be vaccinated every year. The exact timing and duration of flu seasons can vary, but influenza activity often begins to increase in October. The CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of October, since it takes two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu.¹ Most of the time flu activity peaks between December and February, although activity can last as late as May.

Who should get a flu vaccine?

All persons aged six months of age and older are recommended for annual vaccination, with rare exception. Vaccination is particularly important for people who are at [high risk of developing serious flu complications](#).

Who should NOT get a flu vaccine?

People with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine (this might include gelatin, antibiotics, or other ingredients) should speak with their doctor before receiving the vaccine. See [Special Considerations Regarding Egg Allergy](#) for more information about egg allergies and flu vaccine.

Can the flu and COVID-19 vaccines be administered on the same day?

COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines **may now be administered without regard to timing**. This includes simultaneous administration of COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines on the same day, as well as coadministration within 14 days.

When deciding whether to coadminister the flu vaccine, or other vaccines, with the COVID-19 vaccine, providers should consider whether the patient is behind, or at risk of falling behind, on recommended vaccines, their risk of vaccine-preventable disease (e.g., during an outbreak or occupational exposures), and the reactogenicity profile of the vaccines.²

¹<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm#when-vaccinated>

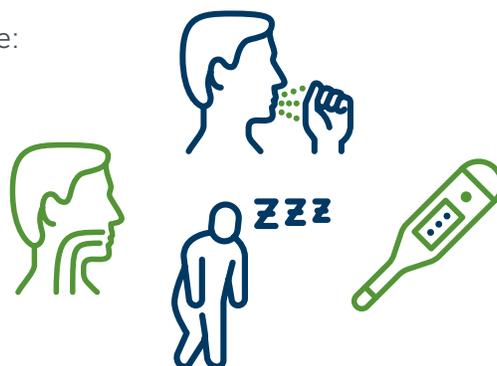
²<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/covid-19-vaccines-us.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

How are the flu and COVID-19 symptoms similar?

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



How are the flu and COVID-19 symptoms different?

COVID-19 symptoms generally appear two to 14 days after exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Flu symptoms usually appear about one to four days after exposure to an influenza virus.

COVID-19 can cause more-serious illnesses in some people than the flu. Also, COVID-19 can cause different complications than the flu, such as blood clots and multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children.

How do the flu and COVID-19 viruses spread?

Both COVID-19 and the flu can spread from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about six feet). Both are spread mainly by large and small particles containing virus that are expelled when people with either of the illnesses cough, sneeze, or talk. These particles can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby and possibly be inhaled into the lungs. In some circumstances, such as indoor settings with poor ventilation, small particles might be spread farther than six feet and cause infections.

Although most spread is by inhalation, a person may be infected by touch (for example, shaking hands with someone who has the virus on their hands) or by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

Both flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to others by people before they begin showing symptoms; by people with very mild symptoms; and by people who never experience symptoms (asymptomatic people).

Which virus spreads faster?

COVID-19 seems to spread more easily than the 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 about [COVID-19 vaccines](#) and [how well they work](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Which virus is more contagious?

While the virus that causes COVID-19 and flu viruses are thought to spread in similar ways, the virus that causes COVID-19 is generally more contagious than flu viruses. Also, COVID-19 has been observed to have more superspreading events than flu. This means the virus that causes COVID-19 can quickly and easily spread to a lot of people and result in continual spreading among people as time progresses.

Which virus causes more serious illnesses?

Compared to the flu, COVID-19 can cause more serious illnesses in some people. COVID-19 can also take longer before people show symptoms, and people can be contagious for longer.

Resources

[The Flu Season – CDC](#)

[Influenza – CDC](#)

[COVID-19, cold, allergies and the flu: What are the differences? Mayo Clinic](#)