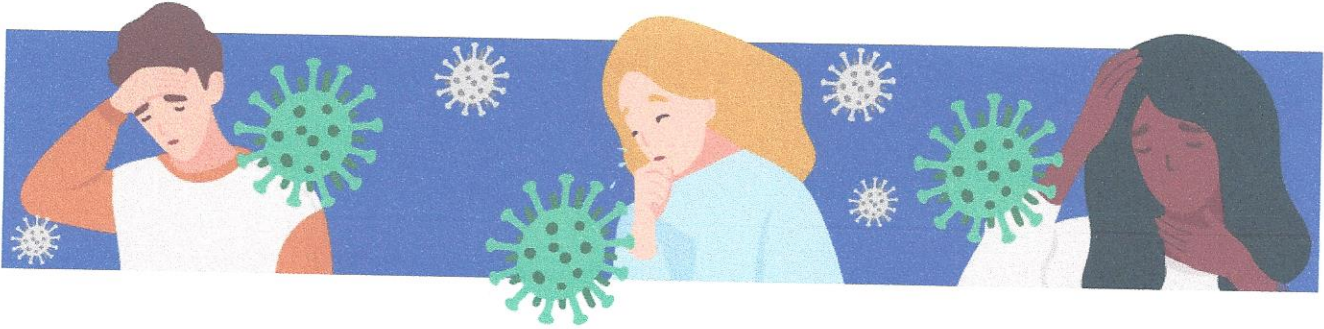


# Influenza (Flu)



## Similarities and Differences between Flu and COVID-19

### 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 new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) and flu is caused by infection with [influenza viruses](#).

There are some key differences between flu and COVID-19. COVID-19 seems to spread more easily than flu and causes more serious illnesses in some people. It can also take longer before people show symptoms and people can be contagious for longer. Another important difference is there is a vaccine to protect against flu. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. More information about differences between flu and COVID-19 is available in the different sections below.

Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and [testing](#) may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two.

While more is learned every day, there is still a lot that is unknown about COVID-19 and the virus that causes it. This page compares COVID-19 and flu, given the best available information to date.

Learn more about how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.



Learn more about how to protect yourself and others from flu this season.



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



## Differences:

### Flu

Flu viruses can cause mild to severe illness, including common signs and symptoms listed above.

### Flu Symptoms

### COVID-19

COVID-19 seems to cause more serious illnesses in some people. Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, different from flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell.

### COVID-19 Symptoms

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## How long symptoms appear after exposure and infection

### 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

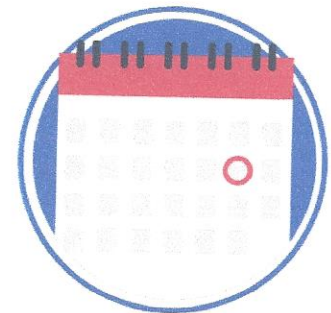
Typically, a person develops symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection.

### Flu Symptoms

### 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.

### COVID-19 Symptoms



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## 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 and 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.







## Symptoms of Coronavirus

Updated May 13, 2020 [Print](#)

### What you need to know

- Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms.
- Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung



### Coronavirus Self-Checker

A tool to help you make decisions on when to seek testing and medical care

[Get Started](#)

[About the Tool](#)

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

COVID-19 illness.

[MENU >](#)

### Watch for symptoms

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as we learn more about COVID-19.

### When to seek emergency medical attention

Look for **emergency warning signs\*** for COVID-19. If someone is showing any of these signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately:**

- Trouble breathing



- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

\*This list is not all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

**Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility:** Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

## Caring for yourself or others

- [How to protect yourself](#)
- [How to care for someone who is sick](#)
- [What to do if you are sick](#)

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## Digital Resources

### Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:



**Symptoms of COVID-19 (PDF)**  
Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness.

### SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:



**Symptoms of COVID-19 (Video)**  
Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

### CDC Symptoms of Coronavirus ...

ASL VIDEO SERIES:

SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019



**Symptoms of COVID-19: ASL (Video)**  
American Sign Language Video about symptoms.

# Influenza (Flu)

## Flu Symptoms & Complications



### Is it Flu or COVID-19?

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 the flu or COVID-19.



### Flu Symptoms

Influenza (flu) can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu is different from a cold. Flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

\*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

This video includes common signs and symptoms of flu.

### Flu Complications

Most people who get flu will recover in a few days to less than two weeks, but some people will develop complications (such as pneumonia) as a result of flu, some of which can be life-threatening and result in death.

Sinus and ear infections are examples of moderate complications from flu, while pneumonia is a serious flu complication that can result from either influenza virus infection alone or from co-infection of flu virus and bacteria. Other possible serious complications triggered by flu can include inflammation of the heart (myocarditis), brain (encephalitis) or muscle (myositis, rhabdomyolysis) tissues, and multi-organ failure (for example, respiratory and kidney failure). Flu virus infection of the respiratory tract can trigger an extreme inflammatory response in the body and can lead to [sepsis](#), the body's life-threatening response to infection. Flu also can make chronic medical problems worse. For example, people with [asthma](#) may experience asthma attacks while they have flu, and people with [chronic heart disease](#) may experience a worsening of this condition triggered by flu.