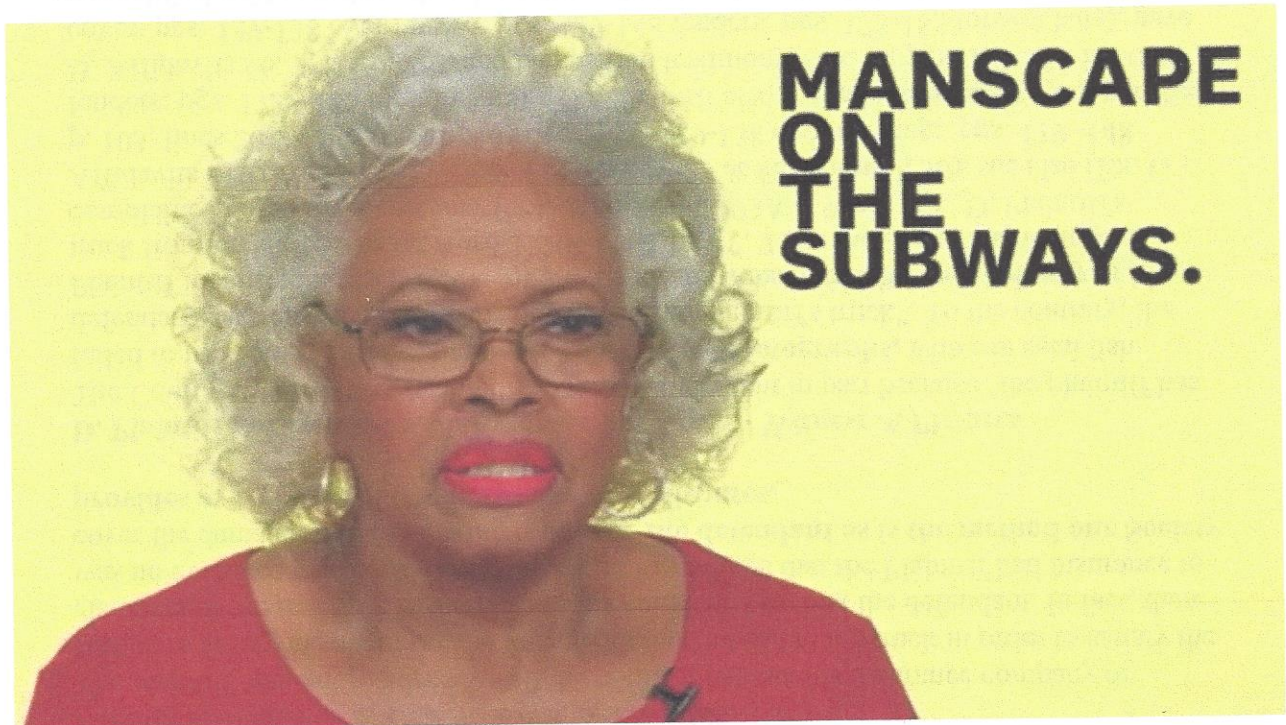


Covid Flu Stronger than Covid 19

Novel Coronavirus Symptoms Vs. Cold And Flu: Experts Explain The Difference

Tbh, it's kind of hard to tell.

BY [KORIN MILLER](#) MAR 30, 2020



As the number of confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus continues to rise (now up to 693,224 globally, according to the [World Health Organization](#)), people are understandably nervous about potentially contracting the virus, [spreading it](#), and [what symptoms they'll face](#) as a result. COVID-19 [can be deadly](#) (the [Centers for Disease Control reports](#) that there have been 2,405 deaths in the U.S. alone from the virus), with the elderly and those who are immunocompromised or have chronic health conditions like lung disease, heart disease or cancer being [particularly at risk of severe symptoms](#).

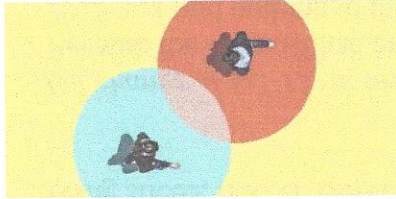
Thankfully, data shows that the majority of people who contract the virus experience mild symptoms and make a full recovery. A [recent study](#) published by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention found that, of the 44,672 coronavirus cases that were confirmed in China ([where the outbreak initially began](#)) by February 11, more than 36,000 (81 percent) of those cases were mild. The study, which is the largest conducted to date on the novel coronavirus, specifically defined "mild" as cases that didn't involve pneumonia or involved only mild pneumonia.

But no matter who you are or what your health status is, it's important to understand the symptoms of coronavirus so you can [seek help and testing](#) if you think you may have it, and [prevent spreading it to other people](#) (though it's possible to spread [even when you don't have symptoms](#), which is why [social distancing](#) is so important for everyone to practice). And since novel coronavirus symptoms can be similar to a [cold or the flu](#), telling the difference between those and COVID-19 can be tricky. Here's what infectious disease experts say you should know:

How can you tell a cold from novel coronavirus?

Technically, the common cold is a form of coronavirus, points out infectious disease expert Amesh A. Adalja, MD, senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. It's just not *that* coronavirus, known as *novel* coronavirus.

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Also, it's actually really tough to tell the difference between a mild case of novel coronavirus and the common cold—even for doctors, says William Schaffner, MD, an infectious disease specialist and professor at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. Instead, Schaffner says, doctors specifically have to test for novel coronavirus to know for sure if someone has COVID-19 as opposed to a cold.

In general, these are the symptoms you can expect from the common cold, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- ▶ Sneezing
- ▶ Stuffy nose
- ▶ Runny nose
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Coughing
- ▶ Post-nasal drip
- ▶ Watery eyes
- ▶ Possibly a fever (but most people with colds don't have a fever)

Symptoms of a cold usually peak anywhere from two to three days after you contract it, the CDC says.



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And, per the CDC and ENT UK and the American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery, these are the symptoms you may experience with COVID-19:

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Loss of taste or smell

← symptoms Covid-19 less than Flu, see below

The last symptom was recently added to the list after it was discovered by ENT UK and the American Academy of Otolaryngology, Head, and Neck Surgery that a loss of taste or smell seemed to be a previously under-reported symptom of COVID-19. In some cases, this was the only symptom patients experienced, so experts urge medical professionals to consider testing people for novel coronavirus even if the loss of these senses is the only indication that they might have the virus.

Symptoms of novel coronavirus tend to show up anywhere from two to 14 days after someone has been exposed, the CDC says. How long the symptoms last depends on the severity of the case. With more mild cases (meaning that symptoms are similar to the common cold or flu), people tend to get better on their own in 10 to 14 days. In severe cases, the virus may travel to the lungs and cause pneumonia, and the symptoms may last longer in those instances.

Treatment for milder cases of novel coronavirus and the common cold is also pretty much the same. "It's all just about treating the symptoms," Adalja says. There's no "cure" for either one.

How can you tell the flu from novel coronavirus symptoms?

Again, it's really tough. "If two patients stand in front of me—one with a mild case of novel coronavirus and one with the flu—and tell me their symptoms, I cannot tell them apart," Schaffner says. "For that, we need to test."

Keep in mind, too, that you're much more likely to come down with the flu than COVID-19. "We are in the middle of a bad flu season, especially for the influenza B strain, so it is much more likely that people will have influenza than COVID-19," says Richard Watkins, MD, an infectious disease physician in Akron, Ohio, and a professor of medicine at the Northeast Ohio Medical University.

Still, these are the symptoms of the flu, according to the CDC:

- ▶ Fever or feeling feverish
- ▶ Cough

← Flu symptoms stronger/worse than Covid 19

- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Runny or stuffy nose
- ▶ Muscle or body aches
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

People with novel coronavirus can have flu-like symptoms, Schaffner says. “Both the flu and novel coronavirus irritate the bronchial tubes, and that produces a cough that’s usually dry,” he says. “Both of these viruses can also make you feel worse in your entire body—you can feel really tired and you just want to go to bed because you have no energy.” Both the flu and novel coronavirus can also lead to pneumonia, Adalja says.

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Flu treatment is different from novel coronavirus treatment, though. While you treat the symptoms in both situations, the flu can also be treated with the anti-viral medication oseltamivir (a.k.a. [Tamiflu](#)) and the flu shot can help prevent it or at least lessen the risk you’ll develop complications if you happen to contract the virus, Adalja says. There’s nothing similar for novel coronavirus ([yet](#)).

What can you do to stay safe?

If you have a fever or cough, [call your doctor for guidance](#) on next steps, Dr. Keith Roach, an internist at NewYork-Presbyterian, says. The best way to lower your risk of contracting novel coronavirus—and basically any virus—is to [practice good hand hygiene](#), Adalja says. The [CDC](#) specifically recommends following these steps every time you wash up:

- ▶ Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap
- ▶ Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- ▶ Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. (The amount of time it takes to hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.)
- ▶ Rinse your hands well under clean water.
- ▶ Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

There are a few [other things you can do](#) too: “Avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth,” Watkins says. “COVID-19 can [remain on surfaces](#), so disinfecting areas with bleach wipes is appropriate to reduce the risk of transmission.” It’s also a good idea to do your best to avoid people who appear to be sick, Adalja says.

And, for the record, no: **You don’t need to wear a mask.** The CDC does not recommend it and U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams recently went on [Twitter](#) to say that they are “NOT effective” (his caps) in keeping the general public from catching novel coronavirus.

It’s also important to [practice social distancing](#) when you can to avoid the risk of spreading it to others, Schaffner says.

Overall, experts recommend practicing good hand hygiene and keeping on top of the latest news. “Go to trusted sources for information like the CDC,” says [Suzanne Willard, Ph.D.](#), a clinical professor and associate dean for global health at the Rutgers School of Nursing. “It is still new in this [pandemic](#), and there is much unknown. There are [lots of theories](#) on this but stick to the facts.”

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Korin Miller is a freelance writer specializing in general wellness, sexual health and relationships, and lifestyle trends, with work appearing in Men’s Health, Women’s Health, Self, Glamour, and more.

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