



## How Is the Flu Different From COVID-19?

Both the flu (influenza ([/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/The-Flu.aspx](#))) and COVID-19 ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx](#)) are contagious and will be spreading this fall and winter. They have similar symptoms, so it can be hard to tell them apart.

Fortunately, we have a vaccine ([/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Prepare-Your-Family-for-Flu-](#)



[Season.aspx#%3a-%3atext=The%20American%20Academy%20of%20Pediatrics%2cthe%202019-2020%20flu%20season.](#)) to help prevent the flu. Make sure your child gets a flu shot, ideally by the end of October or sooner. This is more important than ever this flu season because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Is it COVID-19 or the flu?

Both infections can cause no symptoms (asymptomatic) or include mild to severe symptoms. Flu symptoms show up about 1 to 4 days after being exposed to a sick person. COVID-19 symptoms appear about 2 to 14 days after being exposed to a sick person.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm#:~:text=While%20COVID-19%20and%20flu%2cmore%20superspreading%20events%20than%20flu.>)), shared and unique symptoms may include:

#### Common symptoms of BOTH Influenza and COVID-19

- Fever/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Extreme tiredness
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Stuffy, runny nose
- Vomiting and diarrhea

#### Symptom more likely with COVID-19

- Loss of taste or smell

# Is it Flu or is it COVID-19?

COVID-19 and influenza can cause similar symptoms. Influenza symptoms show up 1-4 days after you are exposed to a sick person. COVID-19 symptoms appear 2-14 days after being exposed.

## Common symptoms of BOTH influenza and COVID-19

- Fever/chills
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches
- Stuffy, runny nose
- Cough
- Extreme tiredness
- Headache
- Vomiting and diarrhea

## Symptom more common in COVID-19: Loss of taste or smell

### If your child is sick:

- Children with symptoms should stay home from school or child care.

- If your child has been exposed to COVID-19, or you are concerned about your child's symptoms, call your pediatrician immediately.

- Everyone 6 months old and up should get the flu vaccine every year to stay healthy and **#FightFlu!**



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## Why a flu shot is important

Children can get seriously ill from the flu, especially if they did not get a flu shot. During last year's flu season, 188 children under 19 died of complications from influenza, according to the CDC. Typically, about 80% of children who die from flu are not vaccinated. That's why children 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine before the start of the flu season each year.

**Even if your child had COVID-19, they can still get a flu shot once symptoms go away if they have not been previously vaccinated.**

The flu shot can be given to children who are otherwise healthy and also children with underlying medical conditions. Children with certain medical conditions (heart or lung disease, obesity, diabetes, or sickle cell disease for example) can be at risk of more severe illness from *both* COVID-19 or flu.

## Where is the best place to get the flu shot for my child?

The best place to get a flu shot is your pediatrician's office. During the visit, your child can get other vaccinations, if needed. Your child also can catch up on any routine care that you may have had to delay because of the pandemic.

This flu season, you can choose between a flu shot and a nasal spray vaccine. Both protect against the four strains of the influenza virus (two A strains and two B strains) that are expected to cause most flu cases this season. Your pediatrician can help you decide which is best for your child.

## Remember

Talk with your pediatrician if you have any questions about COVID-19 or the flu.

## More Information

- Which Flu Vaccine Should My Child Get This Year? (/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Prepare-Your-Family-for-Flu-Season.aspx)
- The Flu (/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/The-Flu.aspx)
- Flu: A Guide for Parents of Children or Adolescents with Chronic Health Conditions (/English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Flu-A-Guide-for-Parents-of-Children-or-Adolescents-With-Chronic-Health-Conditions.aspx#%3a-%3atext=Yes.%2cthey%20get%20a%20flu%20shot.)
- COVID-19 and Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/covid\_inflammatory\_condition.aspx)