

# Flu vs. COVID FAQs



## When should I get a flu vaccine?

There is no change in the CDC's recommendation on timing of vaccination this flu season. Getting vaccinated in July or August is too early, especially for older people, because of the likelihood of reduced protection against flu infection later in the flu season. September and October are good times to get vaccinated. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue, even in January or later.

## If my family practices safe social distancing, is a flu shot needed this year?

Yes, now more than ever, it is important to be vaccinated from the flu.

## Does getting the flu create complications with COVID-19?

Getting the flu or COVID-19 can cause symptoms that could last several days to weeks. Anytime you are ill, you could be more susceptible to developing other infections. It's important to keep yourself healthy and avoid anyone who is sick. By receiving the flu shot, you are better protected from getting the flu.

## How do I know if I have the seasonal flu vs. 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. 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 table compares COVID-19 and flu, given the best available information to date.

### 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:

Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, different from flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell.

## How long will a flu vaccine provide protection against the flu?

It takes about 2 weeks to develop antibodies after receiving the flu shot. The protection you receive from getting the flu shot lasts about 6 months.

Once we know more about the upcoming flu season, we will be able to make better recommendations on whether a second flu shot might be necessary this season. Talk with your healthcare provider to understand if you might benefit from a booster.