

**The more people vaccinated, the more people protected.  
Do your part. Get a flu vaccine.**

It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread this fall and winter. During the COVID-19 pandemic, reducing the spread of respiratory illnesses, like flu, is more important than ever this fall and winter season. Tulare County Public Health recommends getting a flu vaccination now or anytime during the flu season can help protect you. Social distancing and face coverings will help decrease the risk of both flu and COVID-19.

Use the VaccineFinder to find out where to get vaccinated near you. <https://vaccinefinder.org/>

## 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. 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.

### 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

Neither the flu nor COVID-19 is treatable with antibiotics, which only work on bacterial infections. Both are treated by addressing symptoms, such as reducing fever. Severe cases may require hospitalization, and very ill patients may need a ventilator — a machine that helps them breathe. Antiviral medications may shorten the duration of both illnesses.

### Differences

**Flu:** Flu viruses can cause mild to severe illness, including common signs and symptoms listed above. There are medications available for influenza that can shorten the course. People can contact their medical provider to ask if they should be tested to determine if they have flu or COVID-19.

**COVID-19:** Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, different from flu, may include **change in or loss of taste or smell**. COVID-19 can also cause a range of illness, from asymptomatic to severe.



## People at High Risk for Severe Illness

### Similarities:

**Both COVID-19 and flu** illness can result in severe illness and complications. Those at highest risk include:

- Older adults
- People with certain underlying medical conditions
- Pregnant people

Illness from both COVID-19 and the flu may pre-dispose a higher risk for developing other lung infections, including pneumonia, which may result in very serious complications while infected with either or both viruses. For these reasons, it is extremely important and highly recommended everyone 6 months or older get the flu vaccine.

### Differences:

The risk of complications for healthy children is higher for flu compared to COVID-19. **However, infants and children with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for both flu and COVID-19.**

**Flu:** Young children are at higher risk of severe illness from flu.

**COVID-19:** School-aged children infected with COVID-19 are at higher risk of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C), a rare but severe complication of COVID-19.

## Signs of Serious Illness and When to Seek Emergency Care

If someone is showing any of these signs of serious illness, please 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 does not include 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.

