

FLU vs. 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.

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

INFLUENZA (FLU)

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

COVID-19

Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19, different from flu, may include change in or loss of taste or smell. Ranges from asymptomatic (no symptoms) to severe illness.

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.

INFLUENZA (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

Seek emergency medical care immediately for:

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



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