

Is it the flu or COVID-19? What are the similarities?

A look at both respiratory diseases and what they share in common

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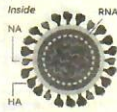
Due to the overlapping symptoms between the flu and COVID-19, physicians and health experts are urging everyone six months and older to get vaccinated for the flu this year. It's particularly important to get the vaccine this year, as one infection can make you more susceptible to others by weakening your immune system.

The vaccine reduces the severity and risk of serious complications from the flu, according to the Mayo Clinic. But the vaccine will not protect you from COVID-19.

Many of the steps recommended to prevent the spread of COVID-19 – such as mask-wearing, hand-washing, and physical distancing – also help prevent the spread of seasonal flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that positive test results for flu dropped from more than 20% to 2.3% during the pandemic.

The flu and COVID-19 share several common symptoms. Here's a look at how to differentiate the two viruses

Influenza



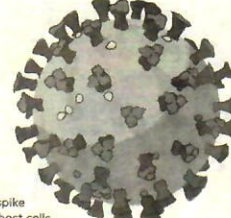
Comprised of 8 single-stranded negative-sense, viral RNA segments. Influenza viruses rely on the collaborative functions of 2 viral surface proteins, to enter and exit host cells.



COVID-19



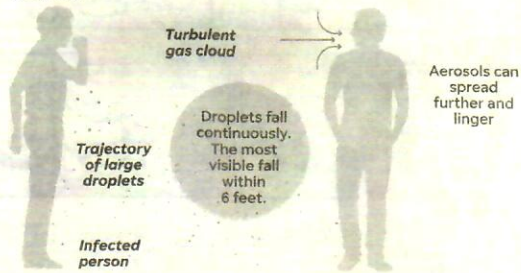
Comprised of a single-stranded, non-segmented, positive-sense, viral RNA. COVID-19 is covered in spike proteins that facilitate invasion of host cells.



How are they transmitted?

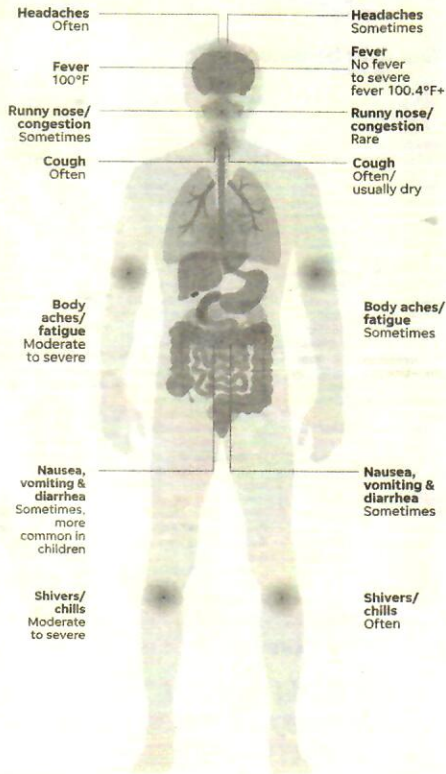
According to World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 and the influenza viruses can occur through direct, indirect or close contact with infected people through secretions such as saliva and respiratory droplets which are expelled when a person coughs, sneezes or talk.

Coughing



Influenza

COVID-19



What symptoms COVID-19 and seasonal flu have in common?

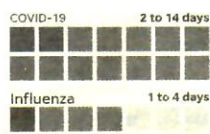
	Influenza	COVID-19
Sneezing	Rare	Rare
Loss of taste and smell	Never	Sometimes
Shortness of breath	Rare	Often
Congestion	Sometimes	Rare
Sore Throat	Sometimes	Sometimes
Diarrhea/nausea	Sometimes ¹	Sometimes
Body ache	Often	Sometimes
Headache	Often	Sometimes
Fever/chills/shivers	Often	Often
Cough	Often	Often
Fatigue	Often	Often

¹ - More common in children
SOURCE: CDC, WHO

How long does it take for symptoms to appear?

When a person is exposed to COVID-19, it can take up to two weeks before symptoms show up. It takes even more time for additional people to become ill after being exposed to that person. So several cycles of infection can occur before public health officials notice signals in data used to track the pandemic.

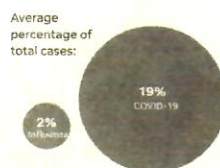
Incubation time



How they affect the health care system?

Studies show that dual waves of coronavirus and influenza threaten to overburden the health care system. The highest rates of mortality from COVID-19 are usually in the areas where the pandemic has hit hardest, overwhelming hospital resources and staff. The overall hospitalization rate in the U.S. for flu 2019 - 2020 flu season was about 69 hospitalizations per 100,000 people, according to the CDC. For COVID-19, it's 175 per 100,000. The mortality rate of COVID-19 is thought to be substantially higher (possibly 10 times or more) than that of most strains of influenza.

Hospitalization rate



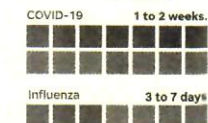
Median hospital stay



How long they last?

According to the CDC, uncomplicated flu symptoms typically are resolved after 3-7 days for most people. Although a cough and overall weakness can persist for two weeks, especially in elderly people and those that have chronic lung disease.

Duration of symptoms



Fatality rate

