



## The difference between COVID-19 and the flu: Suggested talking points

- **COVID-19 and the flu [cause similar symptoms](#), but COVID-19 symptoms can be more severe and may last longer.**
  - Symptoms of both COVID-19 and the flu may include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body pain, headache, fatigue, vomiting, and diarrhea. The only way to know for sure if you have the flu, COVID-19, or both is by getting tested.
  - People with the flu typically experience symptoms for one to four days after infection, while people with COVID-19 may experience symptoms anywhere from two to 14 days after infection.
  - Nearly [one in 10 people](#) infected with COVID-19 currently suffer from long COVID, even months or years after having been infected.
  - People who have COVID-19 and the flu at the same time may experience more severe symptoms than those who have either virus alone.
  - COVID-19 is more deadly than the flu across most age groups and is the [10th leading cause of death](#) in the U.S. However, the flu is still dangerous: Each year, up to roughly 50,000 people [die from the flu](#).
  - Older adults are at the highest risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 and the flu.
- **COVID-19 and the flu both spread through respiratory droplets, but COVID-19 is more contagious.**
  - These droplets enter the air when infected people breathe, cough, sneeze, and talk.
  - People with the flu [are potentially contagious](#) one day before they show symptoms and are typically most contagious during the first three days of symptoms.
  - People with COVID-19 are potentially contagious two to three days before their symptoms begin and throughout the duration of their symptoms—typically about eight days.
  - People can spread the flu and COVID-19 even if they don't feel sick. [One in three people](#) infected with the flu and approximately [one in five people](#) infected with COVID-19 don't show symptoms.
- **Staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and getting this season's flu vaccine can protect you and those around you.**
  - The CDC recommends that [everyone 6 months and older](#) receive a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) and a [flu vaccine](#) this season to reduce your risk of contracting and spreading the respiratory viruses and to reduce the likelihood of severe illness, complications, and death.



- Pfizer's and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines are approved for people 6 months and older, and Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine is [approved for those 12 years and older](#).
- You can get this season's flu vaccine and updated COVID-19 vaccine now. If you were recently infected by COVID-19, you can wait three months after your infection to get vaccinated. Get vaccinated against both viruses by Halloween so you can stay protected through the fall and winter.
- Find pharmacies near you at [Vaccines.gov](#).
- [Wearing a mask](#) also protects you and those around you from respiratory viruses.



## The difference between COVID-19 and the flu: Frequently asked questions

### 1. What are the symptoms of COVID-19 and the flu?

Symptoms of both COVID-19 and the flu may include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body pain, headache, fatigue, vomiting, and diarrhea.

People with the flu typically experience symptoms for one to four days after infection, while people with COVID-19 may experience symptoms anywhere from two to 14 days after infection. Additionally, nearly [one in 10 people](#) infected with COVID-19 are experiencing long COVID, even months or years after having been infected.

People who have COVID-19 and the flu at the same time may experience more severe symptoms than those who have either virus alone.

### 2. How long are people contagious with COVID-19 and the flu?

People with the flu [are potentially contagious](#) one day before they show symptoms and are typically most contagious during the first three days of symptoms. People with COVID-19 are potentially contagious two to three days before their symptoms begin and throughout the duration of their symptoms—typically about eight days.

Some people may not experience any symptoms at all, but you can spread COVID-19 and the flu to others even if you don't feel sick.

### 3. How can I protect myself and those around me from COVID-19 and the flu?

Wearing a [high-quality, well-fitting mask](#) around others and staying up to date on vaccines can protect you and those around you from COVID-19 and the flu.

The CDC recommends that [everyone 6 months and older](#) receive this season's [COVID-19 vaccine](#) and [flu vaccine](#) to reduce your risk of contracting and spreading the respiratory viruses and to reduce the likelihood of severe illness, complications, and death. Updated COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines are available now, and it's safe to get both vaccines at the same time.

If you were recently infected by COVID-19, you can wait three months after your infection to get vaccinated. Pfizer's and Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines are approved for people 6 months and older, and Novavax's COVID-19 vaccine is [approved for those 12 years and older](#). Find pharmacies near you at [Vaccines.gov](#).