

BACKGROUND

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, however, 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.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever;
- Cough;
- Shortness of breath;
- Diarrhea;
- Chills;
- Repeated shaking with chills;
- Muscle pain;
- Headache;
- Sore throat; and
- New loss of taste or smell.

The symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF FLU?

Symptoms of flu include:

- Fever;
- Cough;
- Sore throat;
- Runny or stuffy nose;
- Body aches;
- Headache;
- Chills;
- Feeling tired; and
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO?

While COVID-19 and flu viruses are thought to spread in similar ways, COVID-19 is more contagious among certain populations and age groups—we have seen more superspreading events of COVID-19 than flu. This means the virus that causes COVID-19 can quickly and easily spread to a lot of people and result in continuous spreading among people as time progresses.



WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

To prevent the spread of flu and COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands;
- Clean surfaces frequently;
- Stay home if you are sick; and
- Wear a mask whenever you leave your home.

There are multiple influenza vaccines produced annually to protect against the three or four flu viruses that scientists anticipate will circulate each year. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. Vaccine developers and other researchers and manufacturers are expediting the development of a vaccine to prevent COVID-19.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit the department's [website](#) and the [CDC website](#).

Help is available, contact the Crisis Text Line by texting **PA to 741-741**.