

# Understanding the Flu



## What is the flu?

The flu is a virus that infects the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. The flu is easily passed from one person to the next, so the best way to prevent getting the flu is by getting a flu vaccine every year and frequent handwashing.



## Flu signs and symptoms:

Signs and symptoms of the flu usually begin 1 to 4 days after being infected with the flu. These may include:

- Suddenly feeling very sick
- Fever and chills
- Cough and sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Feeling very tired (fatigue)
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in young children)



## When are people with the flu contagious?

People can spread the flu during the first 3 to 4 days of becoming sick. However, some people can infect others 1 day before feeling sick, and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.



## How do I prevent the flu?

- Get a flu vaccine every year
- Stay away from people who are sick
- Use tissue to cover coughs and sneezes (throw tissues away)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth (germs spread this way)
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, (or use hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol) especially after coughing, sneezing, or using the restroom



## I heard the flu vaccine is not very effective this year. Should I still get one?

A person who has gotten the flu vaccine, and who has later been exposed to the flu may have a less severe illness if they do get sick with the flu. So it is recommended that you still get the flu vaccine even if it is less effective that year.



The flu and COVID-19 can cause serious illness. Younger children, especially those younger than 2 years old, people older than 65 years, and people with certain medical conditions are considered at higher risk.

## What do I do if I get the flu?

- Rest and increase fluids
- Use tissues to cover all coughs and sneezes (throw tissues away)
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol), especially after coughing, sneezing, or using the restroom
- Stay home and avoid contact with others as much as possible until after 24 hours after your fever is gone
- Wear a mask if you must go out in public
- Call your doctor when you first get sick if you are worried, or if you are in a high-risk group
- Take fever-reducing medicine or specific flu medicine that can help with flu symptoms



# Understanding the Flu



## Will the flu vaccine protect me from COVID-19?

The flu vaccine will not protect you from COVID-19. Keeping a safe distance, wearing a mask, and washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use hand sanitizer that is at least 60 percent alcohol) will help prevent COVID-19.

## How do I know if I have a cold, the flu, or COVID-19?

Tests are available to diagnose the flu and COVID-19. Because symptoms of colds, the flu, and COVID-19 may look the same, it is important to call your doctor. Here is a helpful comparison of common characteristics of each:



SYMPTOMS	COLD	FLU	CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)
<b>How it Starts</b>	Starts a little at a time	Starts quickly all at once	May appear 2-14 days after exposure
<b>Headache</b>	Rare	Common	Sometimes
<b>Fever</b>	Rare	Common, lasts 3-4 days	Common
<b>Body Aches &amp; Pains</b>	Sometimes	Common, often severe	Common
<b>Chills</b>	Rare	Common	Common
<b>Tiredness/Weakness</b>	Sometimes	Common, can last 2-3 weeks	Common
<b>Runny/Stuffy Nose</b>	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
<b>Sneezing</b>	Common	Sometimes	Rare
<b>Sore Throat</b>	Common	Sometimes	Common
<b>Chest Discomfort/ Cough</b>	Common - mild to moderate, hacking cough	Common, can be severe	Common, can be severe
<b>Shortness of Breath/ Problems Breathing</b>	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
<b>New Loss of Taste/Smell</b>	Rare	Rare	Common
<b>Diarrhea/Vomiting</b>	Rare	Sometimes (more common in children than adults)	Sometimes
<b>Complications</b>	Sinus congestion, ear ache	Bronchitis, pneumonia, can be life-threatening	Pneumonia, stroke, heart attack, organ failure, can be life threatening
<b>Infection with no symptoms</b>	Rare	Rare	Sometimes

SOURCES:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm>  
<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/flu-allergies-coronavirus-different-symptoms#Despite-symptoms,-its-not-the-flu>

If you do not have a doctor, call 1-877-THR-WELL (1-877-847-9355).



## Questions about the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Call the Texas Health Coronavirus Hotline to speak with a nurse 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**COVID-19 Consumer Hotline: 682-236-7601**

