

COVID-19 vs. the Flu - Fact Sheet



John Hopkins Medicine

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-disease-2019-vs-the-flu>

Similarities

Symptoms:

- Both cause fever, cough, body aches, fatigue; sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.
- Can be mild or severe, even fatal in rare cases.
- Can result in pneumonia.

Transmission:

- Both can be spread from person to person through droplets in the air from an infected person coughing, sneezing or talking.
- A possible difference: COVID-19 might be spread through the airborne route (see details below under Differences).
- Flu can be spread by an infected person for several days before their symptoms appear, and COVID-19 is believed to be spread in the same manner, but we don't yet know for sure.

Treatment:

- Neither virus is treatable with antibiotics, which only work on bacterial infections.
- Both may be treated by addressing symptoms, such as reducing fever. Severe cases may require hospitalization and support such as mechanical ventilation.

Prevention:

- Both may be prevented by frequent, thorough hand washing, coughing into the crook of your elbow, staying home when sick and limiting contact with people who are infected.

Differences

Cause:

- **COVID-19:** Caused by one virus, the novel 2019 coronavirus, now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2.
- **Flu:** Caused by any of several different types and strains of influenza viruses.

Transmission:

- While both the flu and COVID-19 may be transmitted in similar ways (see the Similarities section above), there is also a possible difference:
- **COVID-19:** might be spread through the airborne route, meaning that tiny droplets remaining in the air could cause disease in others even after the ill person is no longer near.

Antiviral Medications:

- **COVID-19:** Antiviral medications are currently being tested to see if they can address symptoms.
- **Flu:** Antiviral medications can address symptoms and sometimes shorten the duration of the illness.

Vaccine:

- **COVID-19:** No vaccine is available at this time, though it is in progress.
- **Flu:** A vaccine is available and effective to prevent some of the most dangerous types or to reduce the severity of the flu.

Infections:

- **COVID-19:** Approximately 81,322 cases worldwide; 59 cases in the U.S. as of Feb. 26, 2020.
- **Flu:** Estimated 1 billion cases worldwide; 9.3 million to 45 million cases in the U.S. per year.

Deaths:

- **COVID-19:** Approximately 2,770 deaths reported worldwide; 0 deaths in the U.S., as of Feb. 26, 2020.
- **Flu:** 291,000 to 646,000 deaths worldwide; 12,000 to 61,000 deaths in the U.S. per year.