

What You Need to Know About COVID-19, the Flu, and RSV

Respiratory Viral Infections

A respiratory viral infection is an infection caused by a virus in your respiratory system -- your nose, sinuses, throat, airways, and lungs. Many happen or start in your upper respiratory tract (nose, sinuses, and throat), such as the common cold, which is often caused by a group of viruses called rhinoviruses.

Other respiratory viral infections include:





















- COVID-19 that typically starts in your upper respiratory tract and is caused by a coronavirus
- Influenza -- or "the flu" -- that infects your nose, throat, and lungs and is caused by several different influenza viruses
- Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) that infects your nose, throat, sinuses, airways, and lungs
- Pneumonia that may be caused by several different viruses
- Bronchiolitis, or inflammation (swelling) of the small airways in the lungs
- Croup, or inflammation of the upper and lower airways, especially in children

Viruses exist year-round, but certain ones can have a "season" when they're most common in the United States. The exact reason why is not entirely known, but these seasons can overlap or happen at the same time. And it's important to know that getting one infection with one type of virus can sometimes make it easier for you to get infected with other viruses and become sick.

COVID-19, the Flu, and RSV Symptoms

Anyone at any age can get COVID-19, the flu, or RSV. You can have them separately or at the same time, and you can even get infected and sick with each virus more than once.

While COVID-19, the flu, and RSV share some of the same symptoms, it's important to remember that they are different illnesses caused by different viruses that can affect you differently. If you have any symptoms or think you've been exposed, contact your doctor.

COVID-19	FLU	RSV
 Fever	 Fever	 Fever (for some people)
 Cough	 Cough	 Dry Cough
	 Sore Throat	 Sore Throat
	 Headache	 Headache
 Shortness of Breath		 Wheezing when you breathe
	 Fatigue & Weakness	
	 Muscle Aches	
	 Runny or Stuffy Nose	 Runny or Stuffy Nose
		 Sneezing
 Symptoms appear 2-14 days after exposure	 Symptoms appear 1-4 days after exposure	 Symptoms appear 4-6 days after exposure

If You're Exposed to COVID-19, the Flu, or RSV

	How does it spread?	When are you contagious?	How sick can you get?
COVID-19	Mainly through the air when someone who's infected talks, coughs, or sneezes.	You're likely most infectious the first 5 days after you get symptoms and/or test positive, but you can also spread COVID-19 starting 2 days before symptoms or testing positive.	Many people will have no symptoms or mild illness. But COVID-19 can be severe and even deadly and lead to symptoms, severe illness, and complications (additional problems) that can be long lasting. It can be especially dangerous for older adults and people who have certain health conditions.
Flu		Can be spread before you know you're sick and up to 7 days after. Some people -- including children and those who have weakened immune systems -- can spread it even longer.	Some people may have mild symptoms, but the flu can be severe and even deadly. Complications can happen to anyone, but people who are 65 or older, younger than 5, pregnant, or have certain health conditions are at a higher risk.
RSV	Through the air and through direct contact (RSV can live on objects for hours).	Most likely to be spread during the first week after you're infected. Infants and people who have weakened immune systems can spread it for up to 4 weeks, even after symptoms stop.	Most people will have mild, cold-like symptoms and recover in 1 to 2 weeks. People at a higher risk for severe illness include those who have a heart or lung condition or a weakened immune system, older adults (especially 65 and older), babies born prematurely or those 12 months old and younger, and children living with certain health conditions.

Questions you can ask your doctor and healthcare team can include:

What should I do if I'm exposed, or think I've been exposed, to COVID-19, the flu, and/or RSV?

When should I contact you?

How and when should I get tested?

What symptoms should I look for?

Am I at a higher risk for severe illness or complications?

What can I do to help protect myself and others?