Yale
NewHaven
Health
(/)

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) vs. Influenza (Flu)

Reach out to your doctor or healthcare facility if you have an upcoming appointment for latest information on hours of operation and visitor restrictions. **Many offices are now offering telemedicine services during this time.** We want to make sure you receive the care you need, when you need it.

If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms, call your doctor or healthcare facility before visiting.

Questions about COVID-19? Call 833-ASK-YNHH (833-275-9644).

The spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) beyond mainland China has now been detected in more than 100 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19"). This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and we will provide updated information as it becomes available. Remember to call before you go.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Overview

Human coronaviruses are common throughout the world. The most recent coronavirus, COVID-19, was first identified in Wuhan, China and is associated with mild-to-severe respiratory illness with fever and cough. The virus that causes COVID-19 is infecting people and spreading easily from person-to-person. Cases have been detected in most countries worldwide and community spread is being detected in a growing number of countries. On March 11, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic (https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020) by the World Health Organization.

COVID-19 Overview

Questions and Answers about the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

What are coronaviruses?

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses that are common in both humans and animals that usually cause mild-to-moderate respiratory illnesses. The source of COVID-19 is suspected to be animals in an open air market and is possibly a previously unrecognized bat coronavirus. It appears to cause a more severe illness progressing to

pneumonia.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. More is being learned about this new virus every day and updates are available on the CDC website (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/about/index.html).

What's the difference between this coronavirus (COVID-19) and the flu?

COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus, emerging late in 2019. Because it is a new virus, public health professionals are still learning more about its transmission, symptoms and severity. To date, the flu is more likely to appear with rapid onset of illness, high fever and prominent headache and body aches. In contrast, COVID-19 may present with slower onset of illness, mild headache and body ache and mild/absent fever.

Coronavirus vs. the flu: Which is a greater threat?

This is a very difficult question to answer as there is no universal answer. Based on what we currently know about the Flu (Influenza) and the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) disease, which we continue to learn more about, both may present issues for the very young, the elderly, and those with underlying medical conditions.

Within the U.S. as of 1:30 pm EST, March 31, 2020 according to the CDC (http://https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html),

Flu season (beginning October 2019):

Illnesses Reported: 36,000,000 - 51,000,000

Hospitalizations: 370,000 - 670,000

Deaths: 22,000 - 55,000   0.04% - 0.15%

In comparison, since the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic:

Illnesses Reported: 163,539

Deaths: 2,860   1.7%

The bottom line, it all depends on the individual. Those with underlying medical issues may be most at risk. Keep in mind, both the Flu and COVID-19 illnesses may present mild to moderate symptoms in most healthy individuals.

Symptom Comparison

Symptoms	Allergies	Cold	Influenza (Flu)	Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Cough	Sometimes	Often	Often	Often
Fever	Never	Rare	Often	Often
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Often	Often
Shortness of Breath	Rare	Rare	Rare	Often
Stuffy Nose	Often	Often	Sometimes	Rare
Sneezing	Often	Often	Rare	Rare
Sore Throat	Rare	Often	Sometimes	Sometimes
Headache	Rare	Rare	Often	Sometimes
Body Aches	Never	Often	Often	Sometimes
Diarrhea/GI	Rare	Rare	Sometimes	Sometimes

*Symptoms may range from mild to severe depending on individual health and/or pre-existing conditions. Consult your physician with questions.

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What are the symptoms of this coronavirus infection?

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 have had mild-to-severe respiratory illness. Symptoms including fever, cough and shortness of breath may appear 2-14 days after exposure.

How will Yale New Haven Health protect patients, visitors, and staff from COVID-19?

At Yale New Haven Health we are employing protective measures to ensure the well-being of both our patients and staff. We are asking our patients who are experiencing upper-respiratory tract infections about their travels, specifically if they have been to China or elsewhere across the globe during the past few weeks. We are taking a cautionary approach by putting masks on those individuals and placing them in a private room to ensure the safety of our patients and staff.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Symptoms May Include

Fever

Shortness of Breath

Cough
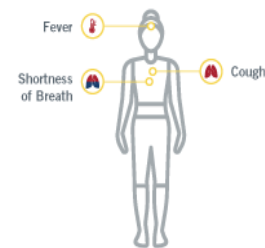
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Where can I get more information about coronavirus?

If you have questions about coronavirus, talk with your doctor. More information on coronavirus is available from the CDC: www.cdc.gov (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/about/index.html)

Influenza (Flu) Overview

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and sometimes the lungs. Older people, young children and people with certain chronic conditions (asthma, heart disease, diabetes, among others) are at increased risk for serious complications, including pneumonia. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine every year.

Yale New Haven Health's walk-in/urgent care centers (/patient-care/urgent-care.aspx) offer convenient, professional medical attention for non-life threatening conditions including the flu and common cold. If you live in Connecticut, our Video Care OnDemand service (/ondemand.aspx) provides video access to clinicians for minor medical concerns.
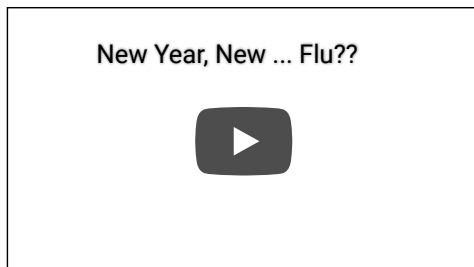
Common Questions and Answers about the flu

How do I know if I have the flu?

Flu symptoms are more intense than those associated with a cold and usually come on suddenly, including a fever higher than 100.5 degrees, extreme exhaustion, severe muscle or body aches, a dry cough and chills.

How long is someone with the flu contagious?

The flu can spread person-to-person before symptoms are apparent as well as while you are sick. People with the flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after their illness begins. However, healthy adults may be able to infect others 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. Young children and people with weakened immune systems might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

How do I prevent the flu?

The most important step in preventing the flu every year is to get a flu shot. It takes two weeks for flu-preventing antibodies to develop after vaccination. You should also take everyday preventive actions (e.g., staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes and frequent handwashing) to help slow the spread of germs.

When should I see a doctor for the flu?

If you think you have the flu, seeing a doctor may help you get better faster and prevent major complications. Those who are considered "high-risk" (i.e., you are 65+, have a chronic medical condition, have a compromised immune system, or are pregnant) should see a doctor at the first signs of the flu. Yale New Haven Health and PhysicianOne Urgent Care operate urgent/walk-in care centers throughout Connecticut and New York (/patient-care/urgent-care.aspx). Connecticut residents can also schedule a visit through our Video Care OnDemand service (/ondemand.aspx).

Note: This page was last reviewed March 18, 2020. For additional information, refer to the CDC's website (http://www.cdc.gov).

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