



NEW MEXICO OFFICE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

PREPARING FOR THE FLU SEASON DURING COVID-19

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November marks the beginning of the flu season. This year, it is especially important to protect our health due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this article, you will find answers to questions you may have about the the flu and COVID-19. These are just a few pointers to keep in mind as we head into the fall and winter season.

PREPARING FOR THE FLU SEASON DURING COVID-19



WHAT IS SIMILAR BETWEEN THE FLU AND COVID-19?

Symptoms

The flu and COVID-19 have similar symptoms. Both diseases can come with fever or chills, coughing, shortness of breath, fatigue, a sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, muscle pain or body aches, and headaches. The symptoms for both diseases can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, can be fatal.

Spread

Both viruses can spread when droplets are transferred from one sick person to another person nearby through coughing, sneezing, or talking. A person can also become infected after touching a surface that has viruses and then touching their face. People who are infected with the flu or with COVID-19 can spread the viruses before showing symptoms.

Preventative Behaviors

A person greatly reduces their risk of contracting these diseases by washing their hands frequently and thoroughly, wearing a mask that covers their nose and mouth fully, and practicing social distancing.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT BETWEEN THE FLU AND COVID-19?

Symptoms

A distinctive symptom of COVID-19 is a sudden change in, or a loss of taste or smell.

Evolution

People infected with the flu will show symptoms within 1 to 4 days. People infected with the coronavirus will show symptoms of COVID-19 between 2 and 14 days.

Treatments

Antiviral medications can be prescribed to a person who has the flu. These medications alleviate flu symptoms and shorten the duration of the illness. At this time, there are no Food and Drug Administration-approved drugs to treat COVID-19. The effectiveness of antiviral medications for COVID-19 is still being tested.

Vaccination

There are multiple flu vaccines. Each year, flu vaccines are released based on the strains of flu viruses that are expected to go around that year. At this time, there are no approved vaccines for COVID-19.

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WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY HEALTHY?

You can protect yourself this year by continuing to practice safe behaviors. Avoid close contact with other people and wear a face mask in public. Wash your hands often. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. You can also protect yourself by getting the flu vaccine.

WHY GET THE FLU VACCINE?

COVID-19 and the flu are two diseases that affect the respiratory system. A combination of both diseases, or one after the other, may have a serious impact on your respiratory health and overall well-being. Flu prevention also has benefits for our communities. Protecting yourself and your family members with a flu vaccine saves healthcare resources for the treatment of COVID-19 and other health conditions.

WHO SHOULD NOT GET A FLU VACCINE?

Babies younger than 6 months of age are too young to get a flu shot. People with severe allergies to certain ingredients in the vaccine, should not get the flu shot. Please talk to your physician for more information.

WHERE CAN I GET A FLU VACCINE?

You can get a flu vaccine through your primary care physician. Many pharmacy chains and drugstore chains offer flu vaccines. To find a location near you, go to [Vaccinefinder.com](https://www.vaccinefinder.com) ([click here](#)). The **New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH)** offers immunizations at public health offices throughout the state to people both with and without health insurance (for more information, [click here](#)).

I HAVE SYMPTOMS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you experience symptoms, but you are not sure if you are sick with the flu or COVID-19, remember to:

- **Stay home** and stay away from other household members as much as possible.
- **Take care of yourself** and monitor your symptoms.
- **Call** your healthcare provider or the NMDOH Coronavirus hotline ([1-855-600-3453](tel:1-855-600-3453)) for next steps.

