

# Flu season returns as the COVID-19 pandemic continues

23 September 2020, by Kim Polyniak



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Influenza, or the flu, is a contagious viral respiratory illness caused by different strains of the influenza virus. It is spread through coughing, sneezing or close contact with an infected person. Symptoms can vary from person to person, but generally include coughing, congestion, [sore throat](#), headache, muscle or joint aches and fatigue.

Maragakis says the flu and COVID-19 are caused by different viruses, but they have similar symptoms, are highly contagious, spread in a similar manner and can affect your lungs and breathing. Cases of the flu and COVID-19 can range from mild to serious, and both can lead to hospitalization or even death.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues with no end in sight, the annual flu season emerges once again. Cases of the flu have already begun to surface around the nation, and there are some reports of co-infection with COVID-19. Johns Hopkins Medicine experts say now is the time to take action to fight against the flu. Doctors recommend that everyone age six months and older get the flu vaccine each year to prevent infection from the virus or reduce the severity of the illness.

"The merging of the COVID-19 pandemic and the annual flu season this fall and winter is a cause for concern and preparation," says Lisa Maragakis, M.D., M.P.H., senior director of infection prevention for the Johns Hopkins Health System and associate professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "By ensuring all of us take necessary precautions, such as getting a [flu vaccine](#) now, we will be prepared before the peak of the flu season. This will also help reduce the amount of flu spreading, which in turn, reduces the burden on the overall health care system already dealing with COVID-19."

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