CONTRA COSTA
HEALTH SERVICES

The Flu & COVID – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is it safe to go out and get my flu shot with COVID around?
A. Yes. Protective steps such as face coverings, social distance, and staying home when sick means getting a flu vaccine is as safe as other essential activities, such as going to the grocery store.

Q. Is it possible to get flu and COVID at the same time?
A. Yes. It is possible to get flu disease (as well as other respiratory infections) and COVID-19 at the same time. Being sick with flu and COVID at the same time could increase your risk for severe illness and hospitalization. That's why getting your flu shot is more important than ever this year.

Q. Can the flu shot protect me from getting COVID?
A. No, the flu vaccine only protects you from flu disease. However, the flu shot can help you stay healthy because getting flu disease can weaken your body's defenses against other infections, including COVID.

Q. How do I know if I have COVID or flu?
A. Both flu and COVID are respiratory illnesses with similar symptoms, such as cough, fever and congestion. People with COVID sometimes experience symptoms different from flu, including loss of taste or smell and stomach upset. One simple and accurate way to tell if you have COVID is to get tested; the County offers [free testing](#) to all residents. If you think you have flu or COVID, contact your healthcare provider. The [CDC also has information](#) on the similarities and differences between COVID and flu.

Oct. 8, 2020

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Q. I hear the flu vaccine isn't very effective. Why should I get a flu shot if it doesn't work?
A. The annual flu vaccine is our best protection against flu disease and flu vaccine is more important than ever this year with COVID. Preventing flu disease means fewer people will need hospitalization for flu and help keep hospitals from being overwhelmed while they treat people for COVID and other critical health issues.

Even if you still end up getting flu disease, the vaccine can protect you from a really bad case of flu disease so you can get back on your feet sooner.

Q. Can someone spread the flu to others without knowing it?
A. Yes. Both flu disease and COVID can be spread to others before the person feels sick, mainly through droplets when talking, coughing, and sneezing and less so by objects that have the virus on it. Someone with flu disease is contagious up to one day before symptoms appear. Also, some people have mild symptoms from flu or COVID while others can have really bad symptoms. It can be hard to predict. That's why it is so important to get vaccinated and to also keep practicing other steps to stay safe and healthy: facial coverings, social distance, washing hands more often, and staying home when sick.