

You may be seeing small clusters of the flu or other ailments for the same reason COVID-19 is continuing to spread

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As Illinois continues testing for COVID-19, many people showing symptoms end up with negative results. Instead, they may have fallen ill

with a common cold or the flu. While some people may wonder why they might catch a cold during this time of social distancing and hand washing, the answer is fairly simple, according to medical professionals.

Dr. Desler Javier, an internal physician at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, said that not everyone adheres to [social distancing](#) measures, contributing to cases of the flu and other respiratory illnesses.

"If everyone lived in a bubble no one would get a [contagious disease](#)," Javier said. "Unless everyone is social distancing 100% of the time, you're still going to get pockets of outbreaks."

Strict social distancing measures could ultimately curb both viruses, said Dr. Ben Singer, a pulmonary and critical care specialist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

"Social distancing isn't in place, that's the reason why COVID-19 continues to spread in the U.S.," Singer said. "In regions of the country that choose to enact strict social distancing, the flu will have a hard time spreading, but as we see that is hard to do when things reopen."

Over the past week, the average number of deaths per day in the U.S. has climbed more than 25%, from 843 to 1,057, according to The Associated Press. Hard-hit states such as Florida on Wednesday reported 216 more deaths, breaking the single-day record it set a day earlier; Texas confirmed 313.

In Illinois, the state announced 1,772 new known cases of COVID-19 on Thursday, the eighth straight day with more than 1,000 new cases.

"We're at a danger point," Gov. J.B. Pritzker said at a news conference Thursday in Peoria, warning again that Illinois could be headed for a "reversal" in its reopening as the state continues to see a resurgence in

coronavirus case numbers.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread, doctors and health officials are also preparing for flu season. With similar symptoms and methods of transmission, doctors are readying for the upcoming influenza season, Singer said.

"Every year the flu has a large burden on the health care system, we have huge numbers, but if you add a pandemic on top of it it can become very concerning," Singer said.

In spite of recent safeguards in place to limit coronavirus spread, the flu is not going anywhere, according to some [medical professionals](#).

In the United States, cases of the flu cluster in late fall and early winter, Singer said. An outbreak of influenza during the last couple of summer months would be unprecedented, he added.

Both COVID-19 and influenza spread through respiratory droplets, often referred to as aerosol transmission. However, COVID-19 is more infectious than the flu, though symptoms for both diseases include fever, cough, shortness of breath and fatigue.

"The initial symptoms can be very similar which is why there's such an emphasis on testing," Singer said. "But protecting yourself against coronavirus is protecting yourself against the flu—one thing we can do to protect ourselves against the flu that we can't with coronavirus is to get the influenza vaccine."

Dr. Michael Lin, an infectious disease specialist at Rush University Medical Center, said flu season will be approached with "cautious optimism" as professionals look to the Southern Hemisphere, which is experiencing fewer cases of the flu.

"I think there will be a large portion of people that will be motivated to get a flu vaccine because of COVID-19," Lin added.

However, it is difficult to measure if social distancing regulations limited the spread of the flu in late March as this past flu season was tapering off, Singer said.

"The prediction would be that social distancing measures designed to protect against the spread of COVID-19 should also prevent the spread of influenza," Singer said.

Factors that contribute to someone becoming infected with either coronavirus or influenza are unclear. The likelihood of falling ill with either disease is driven by what is circulating in the community, Lin said.

"Most people have almost no immunity to COVID-19 which is why we're seeing such rapid spread," Lin said.

Treatments also vary. Currently, there is no FDA approved treatment for [coronavirus](#).

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