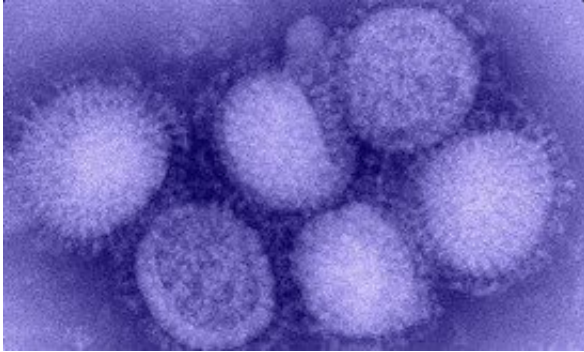


# Mayo Clinic Minute: Flu during a pandemic

October 13 2021, by Jason Howland

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Influenza virus. Credit: CDC, 2020.

Have you had your flu shot yet? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone over 6 months get a flu shot every season with rare exceptions.

Now in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to be vaccinated for COVID-19 and the flu. And you can get both shots at the same time.

"In most places, flu starts circulating by November, December. So it's recommended that everyone complete their [flu vaccine](#) by October," says Dr. Priya Sampathkumar, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases specialist.

Flu cases were low in 2020. And [health experts](#) attribute that to the COVID-19 pandemic and the [preventive measures](#) put in place to reduce

the spread of COVID-19.

"We're afraid that with, in a lot of places, masking recommendations being relaxed, that flu will spread more easily. And the fact that no one had flu last year means there's a lot more people who are vulnerable this year," says Dr. Sampathkumar.

Flu and COVID-19 are caused by respiratory viruses and have similar symptoms.

"It's very, very hard—almost impossible—to distinguish the two just based on symptoms. Some cases of COVID can be very mild and present exactly like the flu. Some cases of flu can be very severe and present like COVID. So really, the only way to know for sure when you have a respiratory illness is to get tested," says Dr. Sampathkumar.

And if you haven't been vaccinated for COVID-19 yet or need a third dose or a booster, you can get your [flu shot](#) and COVID vaccination at the same time.

"It's perfectly safe to get both at the same time," she says.

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