

Is 'flurona' even a real thing?

January 10 2022, by Matt Shipman



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In the first week of 2022, news headlines featured references to something called "flurona," and discussion of "flurona" quickly spread across social media.

It turns out that flurona is simply a word that someone made up to refer to the unfortunate circumstance of someone infected with COVID-19 and the [influenza virus](#). (The flu and coronavirus—get it?)

But a lot of [people](#) didn't understand that it was just poor luck to have contracted two different illnesses, raising concerns and questions about what flurona might be.

To see if there is really anything to this hubbub over flurona, we talked to Matt Koci, a virologist and immunologist whose work focuses on host-microbe interactions in birds. Koci is a professor in NC State's Prestage Department of Poultry Science.

The Abstract: Is "flurona" even a thing?

Matt Koci: We have plenty of things to worry about—flurona is not one of them. And, honestly, we don't need headline writers making things sound scarier than they already are. Flurona is the sensational name given to a handful of cases where people have been infected with coronavirus and seasonal flu at the same [time](#). It is NOT some new frankenvirus hybrid. I can't even begin to explain how ridiculous that idea is. It would be like saying the ocean has an octo-whale because you found both animals in the same body of water.

Getting infected with both coronavirus and flu at the same time isn't common, but it happens. It has happened all throughout the pandemic. Flu and cold viruses were around before the pandemic and they are still

with us. You hope that when you get infected it's just one virus at a time, but there's nothing that says your body can only host one pathogen at a time. Some people might find themselves serving as a host for multiple viruses, and that risk increases if they aren't taking precautions such as wearing a mask. And just like you would think, having more than one virus ripping through your lungs at the same time tends to make the overall experience worse.

So the short-short version is that Flurona isn't some new [virus](#). You can get infected with both viruses (or other combinations of viruses), but so far this has been rather rare. I've not seen any data to suggest that it is getting more common, but if it does, it's substantially more likely to affect the unvaccinated and unmasked first. I strongly encourage people to get their COVID-19 vaccine—and booster, if eligible—and their flu shot.

Provided by North Carolina State University

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