

Can you get COVID-19 and the flu at the same time?

October 20 2023, by DeeDee Stiepan, Mayo Clinic News Network



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Influenza, COVID-19, the common cold and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) are among the respiratory viruses that will be circulating this fall and winter seasons. These highly contagious viruses cause similar

symptoms, making it difficult to differentiate between them.

Those symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Body aches

Matthew Binnicker, Ph.D., director of the Clinical Virology Laboratory at Mayo Clinic, says it is possible for people to contract more than one virus at the same time.

"We've seen patients that are unfortunate enough to contract COVID-19 and influenza," says Dr. Binnicker. "There are patients who have COVID-19 and other viruses as well, that are not infected with influenza. They typically have similar symptoms. Some of the cases have been more severe because they're infected with multiple viruses. It's not a high occurrence, but it does happen."

If someone were to develop flu-like symptoms, the first step Dr. Binnicker recommends is getting tested for COVID-19. Your [health care provider](#) also can order a [test](#) for influenza and RSV.

"We have lab-based PCR tests that test for influenza and [respiratory syncytial virus](#), or RSV, at the same time, and some of the tests that we have in our laboratories will also include COVID-19," says Dr. Binnicker.

Prevention is key

"Prevention is key, and there are a number of ways that we can help to

do that. The first and foremost way to prevent influenza, COVID-19, and even RSV for select groups, is vaccination," says Dr. Binnicker.

It is safe to receive the COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same time. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved updated COVID-19 vaccines that are targeting the most current circulating strains of the virus.

"I'd encourage everyone to go out and get both their influenza and updated COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible. And then recently, this year, there are new vaccines available for RSV," says Dr. Binnicker.

This year, the FDA approved the first RSV vaccine for adults over the age of 60. There are also approved RSV vaccines for infants and expecting mothers between week 32 and week 36 of pregnancy.

Back to the basics

Along with getting recommended vaccinations, Dr. Binnicker says basic [prevention](#) measures can help keep you and your family healthy.

"Then you get to the basics, good hand hygiene. If you're sick, stay home. If you have to get out, wear a mask if you have any symptoms. Then testing so that we know what we're dealing with, and we can take good steps to prevent transmission to other people," says Dr. Binnicker.

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Citation: Can you get COVID-19 and the flu at the same time? (2023, October 20) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-10-covid-flu.html>

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