

Is flu ready for a comeback? Get your shot

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(HealthDay)—Health officials are bracing for a viral double whammy this fall and winter.

"This year, we expect [influenza](#) and COVID-19 to circulate at the same time," said Dr. Jonathan Grein, director of hospital epidemiology at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles.

That's why Grein and his colleagues remind Americans that it's time to get your seasonal flu shot. This fall, it's not only a key to keeping influenza at bay but also part of the ongoing fight against COVID-19.

"By getting people vaccinated and preventing influenza, we preserve our limited health care resources and hospital beds," Grein said in a hospital news release. "Because COVID-19 and influenza have overlapping symptoms, getting vaccinated against the flu also preserves COVID-19 testing resources. These things are critical to keep our community safe as we continue to respond to the pandemic."

according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In California, where Cedars-Sinai is located, that means October through March.

It takes about two weeks for the full benefit of a flu shot to take effect, Grein noted.

While flu cases were at an all-time low during the 2020-2021 season, Dr. Caroline Goldzweig, chief medical officer of Cedars-Sinai Medical Network, doesn't expect that to be the case this time around.

"We definitely think there's going to be influenza this season," Goldzweig said. "Pandemic restrictions have been loosened and people are socializing. As a result, we're seeing patients in our clinics with colds and kids with [respiratory syncytial virus](#) (RSV), which can be dangerous in babies and which we usually don't see until later in the fall."

In a typical year, the flu virus kills tens of thousands of Americans, with children and the elderly being the most vulnerable.

While most people experience [mild symptoms](#), those who are 65 or older or have an underlying medical condition should call their doctor early if they think they have the flu, the experts advised.

Those with mild symptoms including cough, congestion, [muscle pain](#) and fever should be tested for COVID-19 and isolate until they have no fever for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications, such as Tylenol, Grein said.

Goldzweig stressed, "I don't think you should underestimate the toll that the flu takes on healthy people. A true influenza infection causes people to be really, really sick with fever and muscle aches, and can put you out of work for three weeks. We also know that it is possible to get the flu and COVID-19 at the same time, and that would be a bad situation."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [flu vaccine](#).

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