

Stamping Out the Flu

Miller Children's & Women's Hospital
Long Beach Physicians
Recommend Flu Shots
for Everyone



Expert Advice From:

Graham Tse, M.D.,
chief medical officer,
MemorialCare Miller Children's
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As influenza (flu) season arrives this fall and winter, physicians highly recommend that everyone over the age of 6 months should get a flu shot to prevent severe illness.

Dr. Graham Tse, chief medical officer at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach, says that while it's not possible to predict what will happen this flu season, both flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will be present and spreading at the same time.

"With this in mind, it's more important than ever for everyone to get the flu vaccine," says Dr. Tse. He notes that flu is different from a cold or from COVID-19. Flu symptoms tend to develop within the first few days after infection. COVID-19 symptoms can develop even a couple of weeks after infection. Some individuals never have symptoms, yet can infect others with COVID-19.

"The reason we recommend flu vaccines is that we know they are safe and that complications are very rare," says Dr. Tse. "Flu shots protect you from getting the flu, and if you do catch it, it is more likely to be less severe. They can also prevent you from spreading the flu."

"Everyone is at risk for getting the flu and a safe way to reduce the risk is to get the flu shot," says Dr. Tse.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control says people who have the flu often experience some or all of these symptoms:

- fever* or feeling feverish/chills (though not everyone with flu will have a fever)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

Dr. Tse explains that while flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2) and flu is caused by infection with influenza viruses.

"Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone," says Dr. Tse. "Testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis."

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu and COVID-19 share many characteristics, but there are some key differences between the two.

"People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – from no symptoms to mild symptoms or severe illness."

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and can include:

- fever or chills
- cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- fatigue
- muscle or body aches
- headache
- new loss of taste or smell
- sore throat
- congestion or runny nose
- nausea or vomiting
- diarrhea

In addition to getting the flu shot people should be diligent with hand-washing and personal hygiene, social distancing, avoiding crowds, and mask-wearing to minimize risk. Dr. Tse advises families to limit their exposure to other people who are at risk for the COVID-19 virus and to evaluate living arrangements with the pandemic in mind.

For minor concerns and medical questions, he urges patients to call their primary physicians, utilize tele-health services, or visit an urgent care to reach health-care providers. If a family member has trouble breathing or seems extremely ill, emergency services and emergency rooms are recommended.

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