



BRUMMANA HIGH SCHOOL

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

Coronavirus Disease 2019 vs. the Flu

Influenza (the flu) and COVID-19 (the illness caused by the pandemic coronavirus) are both contagious respiratory illnesses, meaning they affect your lungs and breathing, and can be spread to others. The symptoms of the flu and COVID-19 can look similar. The two illnesses are caused by different viruses. The COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly. Since this disease is caused by a new virus, the vast majority of people do not yet have immunity to it.

How the flu and COVID-19 are similar and how they are different?

Similarities:

Symptoms:

- Both illnesses can cause fever, cough, body aches, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.
- Both can result in pneumonia.
- Both the flu and COVID-19 can be mild or severe, or even fatal in rare cases.

How It Spreads:

- Both the flu and COVID-19 spread in similar ways. Droplets or smaller virus particles from a sick person can transmit the virus to other people nearby.
- Or, people can touch a surface with viruses on it, and then transfer the germs to themselves by touching their face.
- People infected with the coronavirus or the flu may not realize they are sick for several days, and during that time can unknowingly spread the disease to others before they even feel sick.

Treatment:

- Neither the flu nor COVID-19 is treatable with antibiotics, which only work on bacterial infections.
- Both are treated by addressing symptoms, such as reducing fever. Severe cases may require hospitalization and very ill patients may need a ventilator (a machine that helps them breathe).
- Antiviral medications may shorten the duration of both illnesses.

Prevention:

Both can be prevented by:

- mask wearing
- frequent and thorough hand washing
- coughing into the crook of your elbow
- staying home when sick
- limiting contact with people who are infected
- physical distancing

Differences:

Cause:

COVID-19: Caused by the 2019 coronavirus.

Flu: Caused by any of several different types and strains of influenza viruses. Different strains circulate each year.

Symptoms:

COVID-19: Many people infected with the coronavirus do not feel sick or have any symptoms at all, but they can still transmit the coronavirus to other people.

Unlike the flu, COVID-19 can sometimes cause a person to suddenly lose their sense of smell or taste.

Flu: Flu does not typically affect a person's sense of smell or taste.

Treatment:

COVID-19: Antiviral medications and other therapy are being tested to see if they can effectively address symptoms and shorten the duration of the illness. Currently, effective treatments are only available in an intravenous form, so they are not prescribed to patients outside of a hospital setting.

Flu: Oral antiviral medications can address symptoms and sometimes shorten the duration of the illness. Because they are given by mouth, these antiviral therapies can be prescribed for patients who are not hospitalized as well as for those in the hospital.

Vaccine:

COVID-19: No vaccine is available at this time and may be many months away.

Flu: A vaccine is available and effective in preventing some of the most dangerous types or to reduce the severity or duration of the flu.

Complications:

COVID-19: Complications including long term damage to the lungs, heart, kidneys, brain, and other organs is possible after a severe case of COVID-19.

Flu: Influenza complications can include inflammation of the heart, brain or muscles, and multi organ failure.

BHS Medical Team

Ref: John Hopkins Medicine