

# Frequently Asked Questions about the 2020 Influenza Season

The symptoms for flu and COVID-19 are similar. These updated FAQs refer to influenza-like illness (ILI) to describe symptoms you may experience for influenza or coronavirus.

Our Caregiver COVID-19 Hotline remains a key contact for answers to your questions about COVID-19 *and* the flu.

To reach the Caregiver COVID-19 Hotline, caregivers in Ohio should call 216.445.8246. Caregivers in the Florida region should call 800.546.4149.

## Flu program and vaccines

### **Q: Where can I get a flu shot?\***

**A:** Caregivers can get free flu shots at main campus, regional hospitals and Occupational Health sites throughout the enterprise.

No appointment is needed. Visit the [Occupational Health flu site](#) for locations and other details. .

For our caregivers located at Akron General, Canada, Indian River, and Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, London, Martin Hospital, Weston, and Union Hospital, more specific details will be shared locally.

***\*Before receiving the vaccine, caregivers must complete the [seasonal flu survey in ReadySet](#).***

### **Q: Do I have to get a flu shot?**

**A:** All caregivers are required to comply with our [Influenza Immunization Policy](#) in one of two ways:

- **Get a vaccine.** If a caregiver elects to receive a vaccine outside of our flu program, [use this tool](#) to transfer that information from Epic into the Occupational Health reporting system as proof.
- **Receive an approved religious or medical exemption.** The exemption request process and forms are available on the [Occupational Health flu page](#).

### **Q: Can I receive my flu vaccine during a doctor's visit I already have scheduled? (I did this last year.)**

**A:** Yes, during any previously scheduled visit.

### **Q. I received my flu shot from a Cleveland Clinic provider or specialist. How can I transfer that information from Epic into our system as proof?**

**A.** Follow the steps provided here in the [Cleveland Clinic Flu Consent form](#) to ensure your vaccination is recorded.

### **Q: Is the flu vaccine free?**

**A:** Cleveland Clinic flu station locations (main campus, regional hospitals, and Occupational Health sites) offer free flu vaccines to caregivers.

**Q. Will the senior flu and the egg-free (Flublok) vaccines be available?**

**A.** Yes, the stronger dose – senior flu – vaccine, and the egg-free flu vaccine (Flublok) will be available at all locations (main campus, regional hospitals and Occupational Health sites) where Cleveland Clinic caregivers can get their vaccine.

**Q: Where can I get additional general information about the flu program?**

**A:** Visit the [Occupational Health flu site on Today](#).

**Q: As a caregiver, I am exposed to patients with flu. What can I do to protect myself?**

**A:** If you haven't already, visit the Occupational Health flu site to find out where you can get your flu shot. In addition, when caring for patients with the flu or other respiratory conditions, wear your required proper personal protective equipment, avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth; cover your nose and mouth; and continue to practice proper hand hygiene and cough etiquette.

## Symptoms and Treatment

**Q: How serious is flu?**

**A:** Flu is a serious illness and should not be ignored. It results in hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands of deaths in the United States every year. It takes weeks for the flu shot to become effective in your body — so the sooner you get your shot, the better!

**Q: I understand that flu (influenza) and COVID-19 symptoms are similar. Who do I call if I think I may have influenza, coronavirus or another Influenza-like illness (ILI)?**

**A:** You are correct—the symptoms for flu and COVID-19 are similar. Learn more about the similarities and the differences between the symptoms at this frequently updated [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Center \(CDC\) site](#).

Caregivers who experience ILI symptoms should call their Cleveland Clinic Caregiver COVID-19 Hotline. Experts on the hotline will screen and assist caregivers with next steps to determine diagnosis and how to return to work safely.

**Q: What is an Influenza-like illness (ILI)?**

**A:** Influenza-like illness (ILI), is a nonspecific acute respiratory illness of possible influenza or other viral illness causing a set of common symptoms. The flu and COVID-19 both present influenza-like illness (ILI).

You may not know whether you have the flu or COVID-19 since the general symptoms associated with the flu and COVID-19 are quite similar. Our Caregiver COVID-19 Hotline remains a key contact for answers to your questions about COVID-19 and the flu.

**Q: If I get sick with ILI, what should I do?**

**A:** If you experience any of the flu and COVID-19 symptoms [listed here on the CDC site](#), call the Caregiver COVID-19 Hotline at 216.445.8246 for a screening and next steps. Make sure to also inform your manager that you will be absent from work.

**Q: Can the flu be treated?**

**A:** Yes, people with the flu can get medicines called antiviral medicines. These medicines can help people avoid some of the problems caused by the flu. Not every person with the flu needs an antiviral medicine, but some people do. Your trained expert will decide if you need an antiviral medicine.

Tamiflu® is one of these antiviral medicines. Cleveland Clinic covers the expense for flu testing and generic Tamiflu for caregivers that have been diagnosed with flu.

Antibiotics do not work on the flu.

**Q: How do antiviral treatments work?**

**A:** When used as a treatment, the antiviral medicine does not eliminate flu symptoms, although it can reduce the severity and duration of symptoms by about one day. Antiviral treatment is only effective for seasonal influenza when it is taken within the first 48 hours of flu symptoms.

## Attendance and Absence

**Q: I've been diagnosed with the flu. When can I return to work?**

**A:** You may return to work after your fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines and your symptoms have improved.

**Q: How will my absence from work be recorded if I am diagnosed with the flu?**

**A:** Cleveland Clinic's paid time off policy allows caregivers to accrue time off for any purpose, including time away for a personal illness.

- Unscheduled time off due to a non-COVID illness is handled in accordance with our attendance policy.
- Unscheduled time off due to a COVID-positive diagnosis is recorded as Required Time Away (RqTA), and is not subject to our attendance policy.

In addition, caregivers are permitted to use the personal illness provision for up to three consecutive absences per 12-month period, as defined by the attendance policy. Refer to the [attendance policy](#) for more information.