

JIF NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund featuring Safety, Health & Wellness

IS IT COVID-19, THE FLU, A COLD OR ALLERGIES?

HENRYFORD.COM



As flu season approaches, it might be difficult to determine whether you have a case of the flu or COVID19. Although they share certain symptoms, COVID19 is more contagious and more dangerous, says Sean Drake, M.D., an internal medicine doctor with Henry Ford Health System.

"While the flu may mutate from year to year, this year's flu is still a cousin to last year's flu," says Dr. Drake. "That means we have some natural immunity to it, along with effective therapy and vaccines to prevent and treat it. But our immune systems are not equipped to deal with COVID19 because we haven't seen it before. And unfortunately, because it's new, we don't yet have a vaccine."

That's why everyone should take precautions—wear masks in public, wash your hands frequently, and practice social distancing. (Doing so will not only lessen your chances of contracting COVID19, but also the flu, colds, and other viruses.) It's also important to get your flu shot this season, to protect both yourself and those who are vulnerable.

But if you feel like you're coming down with something, take note of your symptoms. Although viruses like COVID19 can range in severity and affect people differently, Dr. Drake shares symptoms that are most typical for the novel coronavirus, influenza, the common cold and allergies.

COVID-19

- High fever (around 102 or 103 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Cough (sometimes it can be identified as a deep, dry cough)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Headache and body aches
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

THE FLU

- High fever (around 102 or 103 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose
- Headache and/or body aches
- Fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

THE COMMON COLD

- Sinus congestion
- Stuffy nose
- Postnasal drip
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Moderate temperature (around 100 to 101 degrees Fahrenheit)

ALLERGIES

- Itchy, watery eyes (usually a defining characteristic of allergies)
- Runny nose
- Ears feeling plugged up
- Tickle in back of throat
- Sneezing
- Seasonal symptoms (if you have the same symptoms every fall and spring, it's probably not COVID19, it's probably allergies)

While the above symptoms are those that are most common, especially in COVID19, they can vary. "We've learned 'never to say never' when it comes to COVID19," says Dr. Drake. "Some people have classic symptoms, some can remain asymptomatic the entire time, some can have mild cases."

The period of time someone with COVID19 would see symptoms is two to 14 days after exposure. If you are worried, the best thing to do is to get tested and self isolate until receiving your results.

"A combination swab test that goes to the back of the nose can test for both the flu and COVID19," says Dr. Drake. "It's the best way to determine your illness."

If you have symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested.

AUTUMN DOG WALKS: SAFETY TIPS

WWW.DOGTIPPER.COM

Autumn has its own special beauty, but also its own special hazards for our dogs. To make sure that the memories you return home with are good ones, here are some top tips for making sure your fall dog walks are safe ones:

CHECK YOUR EQUIPMENT

After a long summer of swimming and washing your dog's collars and leashes, take a moment to make sure they're safe and secure.

- Check fabric for weak spots or tears.
- Check leather leashes for cracks.
- Check hardware and make sure all's working.
- Give every leash and collar an extra strong pull (just secure the collar and leash to a fence post and suddenly pull as hard as you can.)

If you have multiple dogs, make sure one of your dogs hasn't chewed on your other dog's collar.

WATCH FOR SNAKES

Fall means snake season! Have a constant eye out to avoid these four venomous snakes: rattlesnakes, coral snakes, water moccasins, and copperheads.

You may get lucky and get a rattling warning from a rattlesnake; it sounds much like a commercial lawn sprinkler going off. But, again, you may not get any warning from a rattler—and you won't get a warning from other snakes.

Keep your dog near you on walks so that you can see where you're both going. Keep your leash to six feet at a maximum so that you can see where you're both stepping.

Some trails make it almost impossible for your dog to heel so a shorter leash makes it easier to see danger ahead and react.

Many snakes like to lie beside trails, not in the middle of them, as they wait for mice and small prey to come by.

WATCH FOR MUSHROOMS

Try to keep your dog away from any mushrooms and assume all are toxic; if you see your dog eat one, take a photo of any surrounding mushrooms and call your vet.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR RODENT POISON

Some households are plagued by mice and rats when the weather turns cool; they may leave out poison for rodents. We've also often seen rodent poison traps (usually black boxes) outside hotels and other commercial areas.

Keep your dog away from all rodent poison as well as poisoned rodents; both are extremely hazardous to your dog.

If you suspect your dog has ingested either poison or a poisoned rodent, contact your veterinarian immediately.

WATCH FOR TARANTULAS

Many of you don't have to worry about these hairy spiders but they



are a common autumn sight in some areas. While they'd rather flee than fight, they can give your dog a nasty bite. Keep your dog away from them, be aware that they can jump, and, if your dog is bitten, call your vet.

WATCH FOR MISTLETOE

You might associate mistletoe with the holiday season but it will be found with berries in the fall months. Different areas have different types of mistletoe (both American and European varieties) and the danger to your dog varies by the type he eats and the amount. Problems can range from an upset stomach to liver failure and seizures. Play it safe and watch your dog closely on walks beneath trees with mistletoe berries.

KNOW YOUR LOCAL HUNTING SEASONS

If you'll be heading off in the woods, be sure you know your local hunting seasons, which may vary by county. Be sure that both you and your dog stay safe walking in hunting season. Early morning and evening hours are typically the most worrisome so plan your walks accordingly.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR ANTIFREEZE

Fall means it's time for many people to change the antifreeze in their cars in preparation for the cold weather just around the corner. Antifreeze is deadly to dogs so be sure you never let your dog drink from puddles in driveways, parking lots and other places that could contain antifreeze.

WATCH FOR AUTUMN CROCUS

This beautiful plant—a member of the lily family—flowers in the fall months; its bulbs are toxic to dogs.

HALLOWEEN AND COVID-19

HEALTH.CLEVELANDCLINIC.ORG



Parents and kids alike are wondering about Halloween this year. But how do you handle trick-or-treating, costumes and passing out candy in the middle of a global pandemic?

TRICK-OR-TREATING

"Your city will determine if trick-or-treating is happening or not," says Dr. Vyas. "If it is, then it's really about deciding as a family what you're comfortable with and how you'll protect yourself and those around you. If your city has determined that trick-or-treating will be canceled, everyone will need to respect that rule as well."

Parents who allow their kids to trick-or-treat will need to consider quite a few things: How will your child maintain social distance from others? How many houses will they be allowed to visit? How will you help your child keep their hands clean and not touch their face?

And then of course, there's the concept of incorporating a face mask (and no, we're not talking a Spiderman mask) into your child's costume. Children who are trick-or-treating (and parents who are out with them) will still need to wear a proper face mask, aka it covers the mouth and nose, has multiple layers and ties around the ears or back of the head.

"Get creative and encourage your child to think about how their face mask can be part of their costume," says Dr. Vyas. "Opt for a mask that matches the costume's style, or have them pick a costume where a face mask is an essential part – like a doctor or a ninja. And as long as your child can still see and breathe fine and there's plenty of ventilation, you can layer a Halloween mask over a cloth face mask." When you get back home, you might be wondering if you should sanitize your child's candy haul, but according to Dr. Vyas, it's not really necessary. "The transmission of coronavirus on surfaces is very low," she says. "But if you feel safer doing it, than by all means do."

PASSING OUT CANDY

If you've opted not to go out trick-or-treating, but still want to pass out candy, consider leaving candy and hand sanitizer out on a table at the end of your driveway. You can even sit farther back from the table so you can enjoy the evening from a distance. Or, you can designate one person with clean hands to pass out candy. Unfortunately this year, experts say to avoid having kids pick directly from the bowl because it could spread more germs. It's also advised to skip on passing out homemade goods.

OTHER WAYS TO CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN

If you've decided that you're not comfortable with Halloween outside of your direct household (which is perfectly OK!), get creative and have some fun with how you'll celebrate:

- Decorate or carve pumpkins at home.
- Set up a piñata for your kids in the backyard.
- Watch a scary movie.
- Create a candy or festive scavenger hunt at home.
- Host or attend a virtual Halloween party and costume contest.

FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR HOLIDAY TURKEY

WWW.CDC.ORG

Follow these four tips to help you safely prepare your next holiday turkey meal.

1. Thaw Your Turkey Safely

Thaw turkey one of these ways:

- In the refrigerator in a container,
- In a leakproof plastic bag in a sink of cold water (change the water every 30 minutes), *or*
- In the microwave, following the microwave oven manufacturer's instructions.

Never thaw your turkey by leaving it out on the counter. A thawing turkey must defrost at a safe temperature. When the turkey is left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours, its temperature becomes unsafe. Bacteria can grow rapidly in the "danger zone" between 40°F and 140°F.

2. Handle Your Turkey the Right Way

Raw poultry can contaminate anything it touches with harmful bacteria. Follow the four steps to food safety—clean, separate, cook, and chill—to prevent the spread of bacteria to your food, family, and friends.

3. Cook Your Stuffing Thoroughly

Cooking stuffing separately from the turkey in a casserole dish makes it easy to be sure it is thoroughly cooked. If you cook stuffing in the turkey, put the stuffing in the turkey just before cooking. With either cooking method, use a food thermometer to make sure the stuffing's center reaches 165°F. Bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached 165°F and may then cause food poisoning. If you cook stuffing in the turkey, wait 20 minutes after taking the bird out of the oven before removing the stuffing; this allows it to cook a little more.

4. Cook Your Turkey Thoroughly

Set the oven temperature to at least 325°F. Place the completely thawed turkey in a roasting pan that is 2 to 2-1/2 inches deep. Cooking will vary depending on the weight of the turkey. Use a food thermometer to make sure the turkey has reached a safe internal temperature of 165°F. Check by inserting a food thermometer into the center of the stuffing and the thickest portions of the breast, thigh, and wing joint. Even if your turkey has a popup temperature indicator, you should still use a food thermometer to check that it is safely cooked. Let the turkey stand 20 minutes before removing all stuffing from the cavity and carving the meat.

