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COVID-19, the illness caused by infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is a respiratory virus, similar in many ways to influenza (“the flu”) and the common cold. As flu and cold viruses increase in prevalence during the fall and winter season, and as seasonal allergies remain active, it is important to recognize the symptoms that can distinguish each of these illnesses from one another.

Prompt recognition and identification of the symptoms of COVID-19, the flu, common cold and allergies will help ensure proper treatment and adherence to University protocols, and will help keep the Columbia community healthy. Remember, diagnosis of COVID-19 or influenza can only be confirmed by testing. **If you are experiencing symptoms of either, stay home, follow isolation and quarantine requirements, and obtain testing to confirm or rule out infection with any of the following.**

Symptoms May Include	COVID-19 	Influenza (“The Flu”) 	Common Cold 
Sudden Loss of Smell or Taste			
Fever/Chills			
Cough			
Shortness of Breath			
Fatigue/Tiredness			
Sore Throat			
Headache, Muscle Pain, Body Aches			
Runny Nose (“sniffles”)			
Vomiting, Diarrhea			

Symptom Onset: Flu symptoms generally appear 1-4 days post-exposure. COVID-19 symptoms most often appear within 5 days, but may be evident as soon as 2 days or as many as 14 days post-exposure.

Vaccine and Treatment: All personnel are [strongly encouraged to receive a free flu vaccine](#). There is not yet a vaccine available for COVID-19. Personnel [must practice non-pharmaceutical interventions](#) to prevent exposure and transmission.

Co-infection: Note, it is possible to experience simultaneous or serial infection with one or more of these viruses, which may result in overlapping symptoms. Please follow up with a healthcare provider for comprehensive evaluation and testing.