



Human Element Issues KISHPNI-HEI-03-2020 **(Covid-19 and Flu Key Differences)**

► Introduction:

The crisis around the COVID-19 is leading to panic, with people tangled with the symptoms of the coronavirus in comparison to the flu. Therefore, it is urgent to understand the differences between coronavirus and the flu, to know how to deal with an unwelcoming situation. The news about COVID-19 bombard people, sometimes leading to uncertainties and increasing the feeling of doubt and stress. Consequently, to get things straight, the Infection Prevention and Control Team published the image seen below to explain the symptoms of coronavirus, a cold and the flu.

► The similarities between COVID-19 and the flu are:

1- Symptoms:

- Both cause fever, cough, body aches, fatigue; sometimes vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Can be mild or severe, even fatal in rare cases.
- Can result in pneumonia.

2-Transmission:

- Both can be spread from person to person through droplets in the air from an infected person coughing, sneezing or talking.
- A possible difference: COVID-19 might be spread through the airborne route (see details below under Differences).
- Flu can be spread by an infected person for several days before their symptoms appear, and COVID-19 is believed to be spread in the same manner, but we don't yet know for sure.

3- Treatment:

- Neither virus is treatable with antibiotics, which only work on bacterial infections.
- Both may be treated by addressing symptoms, such as reducing fever. Severe cases may require hospitalization and support such as mechanical ventilation.

► The differences between COVID-19 and the flu are:

1- Cause:

- COVID-19: Caused by one virus, the novel 2019 coronavirus, now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2.
- Flu: Caused by any of several different types and strains of influenza viruses.

2-Transmission: While both the flu and COVID-19 may be transmitted in similar ways, there is also a possible difference: COVID-19 might be spread through the airborne route, meaning that tiny droplets remaining in the air could cause disease in others even after the ill person is no longer near. In reference to transmission, the World Health Organization (WHO) highlights that **the speed of transmission is a major difference between the two**; this means that **influenza** has a shorter median incubation period (the time from infection to appearance of symptoms) and a shorter serial interval (the time between successive cases) than COVID-19 virus.

The serial interval for **COVID-19** virus is estimated to be 5-6 days, while for influenza virus, the serial interval is 3 days.

This means that influenza can spread faster than COVID19.

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Also, **children are important drivers of influenza virus transmission in the community.** For COVID-19 virus, initial data indicates that children are less affected than adults and that clinical attack rates in the 0-19 age group are low. Further preliminary data from household transmission studies in China suggest that children are infected from adults, rather than vice versa. Those most at risk for severe influenza infection are children, pregnant women, elderly, those with underlying chronic medical conditions and those who are immunosuppressed.

3- Antiviral medications:

- COVID-19: Antiviral medications are currently being tested to see if they can address symptoms.
- Flu: Antiviral medications can address symptoms and sometimes shorten the duration of the illness.

4- Vaccine:

- COVID-19: No vaccine is available at this time, though it is in progress.
- Flu: A vaccine is available and effective to prevent some of the most dangerous types or to reduce the severity of the flu.

Symptoms	Coronavirus <small>Symptoms range from mild to severe</small>	Cold <small>Gradual onset of symptoms</small>	Flu <small>Abrupt onset of symptoms</small>
 Fever	Common	Rare	Common
 Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
 Cough	Common* (usually dry)	Mild	Common* (usually dry)
 Sneezing	No	Common	No
 Aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
 Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Diarrhea	Rare	No	Sometimes for children
 Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
 Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No

Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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