Differences Between COVID-19, Delta Variant, Omicron Variant, and Flu Symptoms

This fact sheet provides information about the similarities and differences between symptoms of COVID-19 Delta and Omicron variants, as well as how the COVID-19 variants symptoms compare to the flu.

COVID-19 Symptoms

Individuals can be infected and contagious with any of the COVID-19 variants but show no symptoms. Those with symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Across COVID-19 variants, symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Delta Variant Symptoms

The symptoms of the Delta variant appear 3-5 days after exposure and are the same as the original version of the COVID-19. The Delta variant has symptoms similar to those of a common cold, such as:

- Headache
- Cough
- More significant loss of smell
- Fever

However, those who are vaccinated most often have less severe symptoms.

Omicron Variant Symptoms

Persons infected with the Omicron variant can present with the same symptoms as previous variants in 2-14 days after exposure, but Omicron infection normally causes less severe disease than infection with prior variants. Symptoms include:

- Cough
- Fatigue or tiredness
- Congestion and runny nose
- Sore throat
- Headache

The Flu is not related to COVID-19, but has some similar symptoms:

Flu symptoms can appear two days (but can range from one to four days) after the virus enters the body. Flu symptoms include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea; these symptoms are more common in children than adults

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