

RISK ALERT

Influenza, Common Cold, RSV, and COVID-19 Prevention and Identification of Respiratory Infections

Welcome back and happy New Year! We hope you had a restful winter break. As we return to school, it's important to prepare for the upcoming respiratory virus season. Below, you'll find essential information on how to prevent and identify common respiratory infections. Let's work together to stay healthy as we start the new year!

Seasonal Illnesses

Flu, Cold, [COVID-19](#), and [respiratory syncytial virus](#) (RSV) are seasonal, meaning they're more common at specific times of the year — though you can catch a virus anytime. The following precautions can be taken to prevent seasonal illnesses:

- [Wash your hands](#) thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes to reduce the spread of germs.
- Wear a mask if you're feeling unwell or when in close contact with others showing symptoms.
- Stay up to date with [vaccinations](#).
- If you're sick, stay home to prevent spreading illness.

What are the Differences between Flu, Cold, COVID-19, and RSV?

The common cold, flu, RSV, and COVID-19 are viral respiratory infections that spread easily, especially during certain seasons. These illnesses share many similar symptoms, which can vary from year to year as new strains of each virus emerge. Many of the symptoms of these four illnesses are the same, such as fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy or runny nose and congestion. This can make it difficult to determine the differences between them. Different symptoms may include:

ILLNESS	ACHES	DIFFICULTY BREATHING	FATIGUE	FEVER	LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL	SORE THROAT	WHEEZING
 COLD	× ×	×	× ×	×	×	× × ×	×
 FLU	× × ×	×	× × ×	× × ×	×	× ×	×
 COVID-19	× ×	× × ×	× × ×	× ×	× ×	× × ×	×
 RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV)	×	× ×	×	× ×	×	×	× × ×
	RARELY ×		SOMETIMES × ×		OFTEN × × ×		

Source: National Foundation for Infectious Diseases

How do I know if I have the Flu, Cold, COVID-19, or RSV?

Since symptoms are similar, the best way to accurately determine whether you have one illness vs. another is to get tested when there is a testing option available or to see your personal physician. Many of the tests are available through doctors, hospitals, and other authorized

healthcare providers. At-home tests may also be an option, such as COVID-19 at-home kits, which are available at many local grocery stores, pharmacies, and local clinics.

Can I get sick with multiple viruses at the same time?

Yes, it is possible for a person to be infected with multiple viruses at the same time.

How are Flu, Cold, COVID-19, and RSV treated?

Treatment can range from over-the-counter medications to antiviral medications, depending on the diagnosis and severity of symptoms. For this reason, if you think you might be infected, ask your healthcare provider about treatment options.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

Only some COVID-19 workplace requirements remain in place. As of February 03, 2025, the specific Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Non-Emergency Regulations have expired.

- **COVID-19 PLAN:** No longer required to maintain a standalone, written COVID-19 Prevention Plan or an addendum to their Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).
- **Safety Obligations:** Remains in place. Employers are still required to maintain a safe and healthy workplace under Labor Code section 6400. If an employer identified COVID-19 as a hazard, they must still take steps to evaluate, correct, and prevent its spread under their general IIPP.
- **Reporting/Recordkeeping:** Remains in effect through February 03, 2026. Employers must report and keep records of COVID-19 cases (Title 8, subsection 3205(j)).

Although employers no longer need a specific COVID-19 Plan, employers must still track COVID-19 cases and ensure their general safety program (IIPP) addresses COVID-19 if it poses a hazard in your workplace.

***NOTE:** As information routinely changes with updates, the information shared in this critical bulletin is up to date as of the publication date. CSRM encourages members to continue to monitor updates from local health departments, Cal/OSHA, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Cal/OSHA suggests when conflicts arise with publications, follow California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

- **CA Department of Public Health (CDPH):**
 - [CDPH Respiratory Viruses](#)
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**
 - [Handwashing](#)
 - [Vaccines](#)
 - [Common Colds - Protect Yourself and Others](#)
 - [Respiratory Syncytial Virus Infection \(RSV\)](#)
 - [Influenza \(Flu\)](#)
- [AMA VIDEO: Start preparing for respiratory virus season](#)
- [LabCorp: How to tell the difference](#)

*For additional assistance or questions please contact
[California Schools Risk Management \(909\) 763-4900](#)*