While more is learned every day, there is still a lot that is unknown about COVID-19. The information provided below compares COVID-19 and the flu, given the most recent information available.

**WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FLU (INFLUENZA) AND COVID-19?**

The flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. The flu is caused by any variety of different types and strains of the influenza virus. Many of the symptoms of COVID-19 and the flu are the same, and both can be mild or severe, and even fatal.

**Shared symptoms include:**
- Fever or feeling feverish
- Chills or shivering
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

Symptoms of COVID-19 that are different from the flu can include complete or partial loss of taste or smell. While COVID-19 and the flu are thought to spread in similar ways, COVID-19 is more contagious among specific populations and age groups.

**WHAT ARE SOME COMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 AND THE FLU?**

Complications of COVID-19 may include long-term damage to organs (e.g. lungs, heart, kidneys, brain). Information continues to emerge regarding potential long-lasting effects. Complications of the flu can include inflammation of the brain, heart or muscles, and multi-organ failure. Bacterial infections can sometimes occur following an infection.

**DO THE FLU AND COVID-19 SPREAD THE SAME WAY?**

Both viruses spread through respiratory droplets made when ill individuals cough, sneeze, talk or sing. These droplets can be transmitted through the air and can collect on surfaces.

**IS TREATMENT FOR COVID-19 AND THE FLU THE SAME?**

Both are treated by addressing symptoms. Severe cases of either may require hospitalization and extreme cases may require ventilation. Antiviral medications may shorten the duration of COVID-19. FDA-approved influenza antivirals treat severe cases.

**CAN THE FLU AND COVID-19 BE PREVENTED THE SAME WAY?**

Both can be prevented by wearing masks, maintaining hand hygiene, staying home when sick, physical distancing, and limiting contact with sick individuals.

**DOES THE FLU VACCINE INCREASE YOUR RISK OF GETTING COVID-19?**

There is no evidence that getting a flu vaccine increases your risk of getting COVID-19.

**DOES THE FLU VACCINE PREVENT COVID-19?**

The flu vaccine does not prevent COVID-19.

Sources: cdc.gov, FDA.gov, Johns Hopkins Medicine, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
Flu vaccines help with the prevention and spread of influenza as well as reduce hospitalizations and the duration or severity of viral infections. People are encouraged to get vaccinated every year. If more than 40% of Wisconsinites received the vaccine each year, communities would see less transmission and fewer serious complications.

**DO ANTIBIOTICS WORK AGAINST COVID-19 OR THE FLU?**

Antibiotics do not work against viruses. They only work against bacterial infections.

**SHOULD I GET MY CHILD A FLU VACCINE?**

According to a new American Academy of Pediatrics statement, influenza vaccination is recommended for those 6 months and older without underlying health conditions.

**CAN CHILDREN WITH COVID-19 RECEIVE THE FLU VACCINE?**

Children with COVID-19 can receive a vaccine after recovery. Children with nasal congestion should have the nasal spray version of the vaccine after congestion has cleared.

**ARE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS RECOMMENDED FOR HOW THE FLU VACCINE IS GIVEN DURING THE PANDEMIC?**

Yes. Health and safety measures should be in place including practitioners wearing a face mask, clean gloves and eye protection. Gowns are not required.

**CAN SOMEONE GET THE FLU AND COVID-19 AT THE SAME TIME?**

Yes, it possible to test positive for the flu and COVID-19 at the same time.

**HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR COVID-19 OR FLU SYMPTOMS TO APPEAR AFTER SOMEONE IS EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WHO IS SICK?**

With the flu, a person can develop symptoms anywhere from 1 to 4 days after infection. With COVID-19, a person typically develops symptoms 5 days after being infected, but symptoms can appear as early as 2 days after infection or as late as 14 days after.

**HOW LONG CAN SOMEONE BE CONTAGIOUS WITH THE FLU OR COVID-19?**

While still under investigation, a person with COVID-19 may be contagious longer than if they had the flu. It is possible to be contagious for about 2 days before experiencing symptoms and individuals can remain contagious for at least 10 days after symptoms appear. If someone has no symptoms or symptoms go away, they may still be contagious for at least 10 days after testing positive for the virus.

Most people with the flu are contagious for about 1 day before they show symptoms. Older children and adults appear to be most contagious during the initial 3-4 days of their illness and stay contagious for approximately 7 days. Infants and immunocompromised individuals can be contagious for even longer than a week.

Sources: cdc.gov, FDA.gov, Johns Hopkins Medicine, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)