



**ALERT**

# WILL THERE BE A **FLU SEASON** THIS YEAR?

There has been a **steady increase in the number of flu cases** reported recently. This is **unusual** because the flu season usually runs from **March to September**.<sup>1</sup> In 2019 there were only **8 reported cases of flu** between October and December, while in 2021 there were **277 cases** reported during the same period.<sup>2</sup>

## Why are we seeing flu now?

- The use of **masks, social distancing** and **restriction of movement** meant that there were fewer cases of flu in 2020 and 2021.<sup>1,3</sup>
- As **non-pharmaceutical interventions like using masks and social distancing have been relaxed**, flu cases are starting to increase.<sup>1,3</sup>

## Can I be infected with flu and COVID-19 at the same time?

- Yes. It is possible to have flu and other respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 **at the same time**. When someone is infected with an influenza virus and SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, this is called a **co-infection**<sup>4</sup>
- We are likely to have flu and COVID-19 virus's circulating at the same time which **will increase the chance of co-infection**.<sup>4,5</sup>
- **Prevent healthcare visits and severe** COVID-19 and influenza by being vaccinated against both diseases.<sup>5,6</sup>

## Are you at high risk for complications from flu?<sup>5</sup>



Individuals **younger than 2 years**



Individuals who are **morbidly obese**



Individuals **older than 65 years**



Individuals infected with ***Mycobacterium Tuberculosis* (TB)** or **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**



**Pregnant** woman including the post-partum period



Individuals with chronic diseases like **Diabetes** or **Asthma**

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## HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM FLU?!

To prevent contracting or spreading flu:



Avoid close **contact** with **sick** people



Wear your mask



Stay **home** when you are sick



Clean your **hands** regularly



Cover your **mouth and nose** when coughing or sneezing



Avoid **touching your face** and **clean and disinfect** common areas

## THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT FLU IS BY HAVING YOUR ANNUAL FLU VACCINATION<sup>5</sup>

Ask your **Healthcare Provider** about the **flu vaccines** available **this season**.



**References:** **1.** <https://www.nicd.ac.za/alert-increase-in-influenza-cases-in-south-africa/> **2.** WHO. FluNet **3.** Sanz-Muoz, I et al. Social Distancing, Lockdown and the Wide Use of Mask: A Magic Solution or a Double-Edged Sword for Respiratory Viruses Epidemiology? *Vaccines* 2021;9:595 **4.** Frequently Asked Influenza (Flu) Questions: 2021-2022 Season/**5.** Blumberg L, Cohen C, Dawood H, et al. Influenza NICD Recommendations for the diagnosis, prevention, management and public health response. Available at: <https://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/INFLUENZA-GUIDELINES-2020.pdf>. **6.** WHO. Co-administration of seasonal inactivated influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. Interim Guidance June 2021. **7.** <https://www.news24.com/health24/medical/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/flu-and-covid-19-and-flu-on-the-rise-should-you-be-worried-20220110-2>

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