Believe it or not, last influenza season was simple, and 2020 will bring us some challenges. If you are to develop normal influenza like symptoms such as fever, headache, sore throat, etc., how will you know if you have influenza or COVID-19? Influenza and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but are caused by different viruses. Some of the symptoms of influenza and COVID-19 are similar, so it may be difficult to tell the difference between them based on your symptoms alone. Testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis of influenza or COVID-19.

As stated, influenza and COVID-19 can display similar symptoms. Those symptoms include:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pains or body aches
- Headaches
- Vomiting and diarrhea

As you can see, if you display any of the symptoms listed above, it will be very difficult to differentiate between influenza and COVID-19. One difference is for influenza, it can cause mild to severe illnesses (depending on if you obtained a flu shot) that includes the signs and symptoms listed above. With COVID-19, a major difference is the symptom of change in or loss of taste or smell, you typically do not display this symptom with influenza. Also, COVID-19 seems to cause more serious illnesses in some individuals, such as older adults, individuals with certain underlying medical conditions and pregnant women.

How do you prevent getting influenza or COVID-19? To prevent or lessen the effects of influenza, be sure to obtain a flu shot every year. As of right now, there is not a prevention of COVID-19. You need to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines of social distancing, wearing your mask, and hand washing to prevent getting COVID-19. If you find yourself displaying any of the symptoms listed above, please call Protect Purdue Health Center (PPHC) at 765-496-4636.

Reference: CDC. What is the difference between influenza (flu) and COVID-19? Accessed10/26/2020