

Could COVID come roaring back in the fall and winter — but as a less threatening flu-like seasonal virus?

As with influenza and the coronaviruses that cause common colds, there appears to be a seasonal element to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2. Which means that, as the days shorten and temperatures cool in a few months, there's a good chance that case numbers will start rising again.

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The well-known Covid-19 forecasting model maintained by the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, which took a lot of [deserved flak](#) for its methods and errors early in the pandemic but [since September \[2020\]](#) has proved a pretty reliable guide to the disease's medium-term U.S. trajectory, also incorporates seasonality.

[It foresees](#) continued declines in U.S. daily Covid infections until mid-July, followed by a doubling up to Sept. 1, the current forecast end date.

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I do worry that, by not talking more about the disease's seasonality, public health officials risk stumbling into a situation in which late-summer and early-fall school, office and entertainment re-openings are followed by a rise in cases that makes it seem like everything is spiraling out of control again. Far better to signal now that we may have to retrench somewhat come fall.

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