

COVID-19, cold, flu, or allergy?

Know the difference

You're feeling pretty lousy. You've got sniffles, sneezing, and a sore throat. Is it COVID-19, a cold, flu, or allergies? It can be hard to tell them apart because they share so many symptoms. But understanding the differences will help you choose the best treatment.



Symptoms	COVID-19* Symptoms range from mild to severe	COLD Gradual onset of symptoms	FLU Abrupt onset of symptoms	ALLERGY Abrupt onset of symptoms
Length of Symptoms	7-25 days	Less than 14 days	7-14 days	Several weeks
Fever	Common	Rare	Usual, high (100-102°F), sometimes higher, especially in young children); lasts 3-4 days	Never
Shortness of Breath	Sometimes	No**	No**	No**
Headache	Sometimes	Uncommon	Common	Uncommon
Body Aches, Pains	Sometimes	Slight	Usual; often severe	Never
Fatigue, Weakness	Sometimes	Sometimes	Usual, can last up to 3 weeks	Sometimes
Extreme Exhaustion	Sometimes	Never	Usual, at the beginning of the illness	Never
Stuffy, Runny Nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes	Common
Sneezing	No	Usual	Sometimes	Usual
Sore Throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common	Common, can become severe	Sometimes

*Information is still evolving.

**Allergies, colds and flus can trigger asthma, which can lead to shortness of breath. COVID-19 is the only one linked to shortness of breath on its own.

Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), College of Allergy, World Health Organization (WHO)