

Is It Asthma, Allergies, a Cold, COVID-19, the Flu, or RSV?

Symptoms	Asthma Gradual or abrupt onset of symptoms	Seasonal Allergies Abrupt onset of symptoms	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Coronavirus (COVID-19) [†] Symptoms range from mild to severe	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms	Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Gradual onset of symptoms
Length of Symptoms	Can start quickly or last for hours or longer*	Several weeks	Less than 14 days	7-25 days	7-14 days	7-10 days
Cough	Common (can be dry or wet/productive)	Rare (usually dry unless it triggers asthma)	Common (mild)	Common (usually dry)	Common (usually dry)	Common
Wheezing	Common	No**	No**	No**	No**	Common
Shortness of Breath or Trouble Breathing	Common	No**	No**	Sometimes	No**	No*** (sometimes in infants)
Chest Tightness/Pain	Common	No**	No**	Sometimes	No**	No**
Rapid Breathing	Common	No**	No**	Rare	No**	No** (sometimes in infants)
Sneezing	No**	Common	Common	Rare	No	Common

Your symptoms may vary. If you have any cold, COVID-19, or flu-like symptoms, talk with your doctor, get tested, and stay home. *If you are having trouble breathing and your quick-relief medicine is not helping your asthma symptoms, call your health care provider or seek medical attention immediately. **Allergies, colds, flu, and some newer strains of COVID-19 can all trigger asthma which can lead to shortness of breath, chest tightness/pain, and rapid breathing. People with both allergies and asthma may have runny nose, sore throat, and sneezing. ***This is not common but may be seen in babies 6 months or younger. †Information about COVID-19 is still evolving. Many people may not have symptoms.

Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Edited with medical review: 1/18/24 • aafa.org/r/ti

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Symptoms	Asthma Gradual or abrupt onset of symptoms	Seasonal Allergies Abrupt onset of symptoms	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Coronavirus (COVID-19)[†] Symptoms range from mild to severe	Flu Abrupt onset of symptoms	Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Gradual onset of symptoms
Length of Symptoms	Can start quickly or last for hours or longer*	Several weeks	Less than 14 days	7 25 days	7 14 days	7 10 days
Runny or Stuffy Nose	No**	Common	Common	Common	Sometimes	Common
Sore Throat	No**	Sometimes (usually mild)	Common	Common	Sometimes	Rare
Fever	No	No	Short Fever Period	Common	Common	Common
Feeling Tired and Weak	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common	Common	Rare
Headaches	Rare	Sometimes (related to sinus pain)	Rare	Common	Common	No
Body Aches and Pains	No	No	Common	Common	Common	Rare
Diarrhea, Nausea and Vomiting	No	No	Rare	Common	Sometimes	No
Chills	No	No	No	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Loss of Taste or Smell	No	Sometimes	Rare	Common	Rare	No

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