

# SICKNESS OR SEASONAL ALLERGIES?

Your In-Depth Comparison



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When allergy season rolls around, it can be hard to determine why you feel under the weather. You have a headache, a stuffy nose, or you can't stop sneezing. Sure, it could just be allergies – or it could be a cold or the flu.

Allergy symptoms can be similar to other illnesses, but treatments are very different. In order to feel better, you first have to figure out what's going on with your body – and there are enough differences between allergies and other ailments that you can do so.

## Remember

The only one who can give you a proper diagnosis is a medical professional. This eBook is not intended to provide a medical diagnosis – it's to educate. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please contact the hospital or dial 911.

## Check Your Symptoms

Many symptoms of common ailments, such as colds, cases of flu, allergies, and even COVID-19, can be similar. Unfortunately, the times of year commonly associated with illnesses often overlap with allergy seasons. While this poses some challenges in determining where your symptoms are coming from, there are a few telltale signs that can help you.

While sneezing, a runny (or stuffy) nose, and a weak and tired body could be caused by numerous things – the flu, a cold, or seasonal allergies – there are some specific symptoms you can watch out for to clue you in.



## Do You Have a Fever?

A fever is a telltale sign that it's something more than just seasonal allergies. Allergies never cause a fever, so if you're running a higher temperature, it's time to rule allergies out.

Colds can cause fevers, but it's rare. If you have a fever, the flu is the most likely culprit. However, it can also be a sign of a sinus infection, COVID-19, or something more serious.

Adults with a fever below 102 may be able to beat the heat with plenty of rest and water, but should contact a doctor if it's accompanied by an intense headache and shortness of breath. If you have a fever over 102 that lasts for more than three days, it's time to seek medical advice from a doctor.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Never	Often - High fever	Rarely	Often - High Fever

## Do You Have Itchy Eyes?

If you are suffering from itchy and puffy eyes, seasonal allergies are the most likely culprit. Although, if you have a fever, it is possible for your eyes to water, causing itchy, swollen eyes. Sometimes, you can also develop conjunctivitis when you have a cold – otherwise known as pink eye. These complications are not very common.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Usually	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely

## Is Your Body Sore?

Although inflammation from allergies may cause some soreness, allergies rarely cause body aches and pains. These symptoms are way more common with a cold, flu, or COVID-19. The severity of your body aches will usually tell you which ailment you're suffering from. Colds often don't cause body aches — and when they do, they are mild in comparison to those caused by the flu or COVID-19.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Rarely	Likely, severe	Sometimes	Usually, severe

## Do You Have Nausea? Are You Vomiting?

Seasonal allergies and colds won't make you feel nauseous or vomit. While vomiting and shortness of breath are more common in children who have the flu, they also happen in adults. COVID-19 causes nausea and vomiting on occasion. Food allergies, stomach infections, and food poisoning also cause these symptoms, so be sure to look into these causes if no other symptoms are present.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Never	Sometimes	Never	Sometimes

## Do You Have Chest Discomfort?

Mild chest discomfort might occur during a cold, with more severe chest discomfort caused by the flu. Discomfort in your chest is not typical of allergies unless you have allergic asthma. On the other hand, chest pains are one of the most common symptoms of COVID-19.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Rarely only with allergic asthma	Usually, severe	Mild to moderate	Usually, severe

## Do You Have Diarrhea?

Allergies won't cause diarrhea, and typically, neither will a common cold. The flu can cause diarrhea, especially in children. Sometimes COVID-19 may also cause diarrhea. Other causes may be food poisoning or a stomach infection.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Never	Sometimes	Never	Sometimes

## Are You Extremely Exhausted?

If you are experiencing more than just tiredness and have extreme exhaustion, the cause is unlikely to be allergies or the cold. However, both the flu and COVID-19 can cause extreme exhaustion (although it's a more common occurrence with COVID-19).

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Never	Sometimes	Never	Usually

## Have You Lost Your Taste and/or Smell?

Losing your sense of taste or smell can happen with a cold, the flu, or allergies if you have a particularly bad stuffy nose. However, it's not especially common and is not likely to be the first symptom. A loss of taste and/or smell, however, is one of the most common and earliest symptoms of COVID-19. If you notice that you can't smell or taste anything, take a test even if very few to no other symptoms are present.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Rarely	Rarely	Rarely	Usually

## Do You Have a Headache?

Headaches can be caused by colds, cases of flu, COVID-19, and allergies. They are less common in colds than the other ailments but can still occur. When it comes to the flu and COVID-19, the headaches will likely be more prominent and severe.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Often	Often	Sometimes	Usually

## Do You Have a Dry Cough?

COVID-19, the common cold, the flu, and allergies can all come with a cough. Allergies are the least likely to cause a cough, but it isn't uncommon. The big difference is that COVID-19 typically causes a dry cough.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Sometimes	Usually	Usually	Usually, Dry

## Do You Have a Sore Throat?

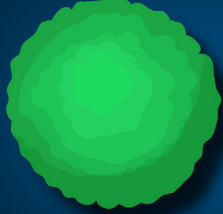
All four ailments can cause a sore throat – but allergies are less likely to do so, as compared to the others. A sore throat when you are experiencing allergies is likely going to be caused by excessive mucus dripping into your throat and a need to clear it. While this can happen, it's more likely you'll experience a sore throat with the flu, a common cold, and COVID-19.

Allergies	Flu	Cold	COVID
Rarely	Usually	Usually	Usually



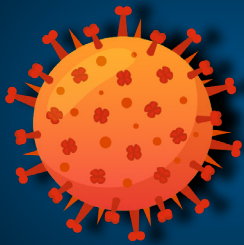
### What to Do When You Have Allergies?

In addition to fasting for any predetermined blood tests and if you're suffering from allergies, the best thing you can do is avoid common allergens like pollen, mold, and dust. This is often easier said than done, depending on the season. You can also take antihistamines, nasal steroids, and decongestants to ease your symptoms.



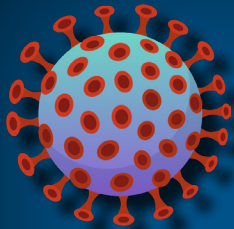
### What to Do When You Have a Common Cold?

Usually, you don't need medical care for the common cold unless your symptoms become severe. Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of water, and if need be, use a saline nasal rinse and humidifier. After seven to ten days, your symptoms should be gone, though a cough may linger. If you are still experiencing symptoms after that period, or your symptoms get worse, it's best to see a health care provider.



### What to Do When You Have the Flu?

Typically, if you are in good health, you can take care of yourself when you have the flu. Rest and fluids help your body recover. If you have a fever, taking acetaminophen like Tylenol or ibuprofen like Advil can lower it and ease pain in your body. Make sure to stay home for at least 24 hours or until your fever breaks so that you don't infect others. Most often, symptoms start to fade after a week. If they persist or get worse, you may want to see a healthcare provider.



### What to Do When You Have COVID-19?

If you are over the age of 65 or have any chronic medical conditions, you should call your healthcare provider when you start to show symptoms. These factors put you at greater risk of becoming seriously ill when you have COVID-19.

Most individuals can take care of themselves at home when they have COVID-19, as they will only develop a mild illness. Typically, you want to get a lot of rest, drink a lot of fluids, and use pain relievers, as needed.

If your symptoms evolve into troubled breathing, persistent chest pain, and mental fog or confusion, get medical attention right away.

[Current government guidelines](#) say you should isolate yourself from others for at least five days. You can end your isolation after the fifth day if you haven't had a fever for 24 hours without medication and are showing no other symptoms. If they persist, it is recommended you isolate for at least ten days. If you end your isolation early, it is still recommended you wear a mask for the full ten days after your positive COVID test.

### Handle Your Chronic Allergies and More With Meridian HealthCare

If you're looking to get relief from chronic allergies or help with all of life's illnesses – look no further than Meridian HealthCare. Our medical professionals believe in whole-person health and well-being, so we offer a wide range of services and creative treatments like acupuncture and chiropractic care. ([Did you know that acupuncture helps fight seasonal allergies?](#)) When you book an appointment with a primary care doctor at Meridian, you'll be partnering with a team of healthcare professionals who are ready to address your needs.

Call us today at 330-574-7560