

Differences between COVID-19, cold, flu and allergies*

When COVID-19 overlaps with cold & flu season or allergy season, it can be hard to know what your symptoms are telling you. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are **cough, fever, and fatigue**. Another key symptom can be **loss of smell or taste**. In severe cases, **trouble breathing** becomes common. It's also possible to be infected but have very few symptoms, or no symptoms at all. This chart shows you some of the main similarities and differences.

Symptoms	COVID-19	Cold	Flu	Seasonal allergies
Cough	✓ Common (usually dry)	✓ Common (mild)	✓ Common (usually dry)	Rare (usually dry)
Fever	✓ Common	Rare, short duration	✓ Common	No
Fatigue (feeling tired or weak)	✓ Common	Sometimes	✓ Common	Sometimes
Aches and pains	✓ Common	Sometimes	✓ Common	No
Headaches	✓ Common	Rare	✓ Common	Sometimes (from sinus pain)
Runny or stuffy nose	✓ Common	✓ Common	Sometimes	✓ Common
Sore throat	✓ Common	✓ Common	Sometimes	Sometimes (usually mild)
Diarrhea/nausea and vomiting	✓ Common	Rare	Sometimes (more in children)	No
Chills	✓ Common	No	Sometimes	No
Loss of taste or smell	✓ Common (early)	Rare	Rare	Sometimes
Shortness of breath	✓ Common in severe cases	No	No	No (unless asthma)
Chest tightness/pain	Sometimes	No	No	No
Rapid breathing	Rare	No	No	No
Sneezing	Rare	✓ Common	Rare	✓ Common
When contagious	Days before symptoms **	Days before symptoms	At least 1 day before symptoms	Not contagious
When symptoms start	2-14 days after exposure **	1-3 days after exposure	1-4 days after exposure	After exposure to triggers
How long symptoms last	7-25 days, or longer **	Less than 14 days	7-14 days	Days, weeks or months

* This table does not list all possible symptoms and is not meant to replace any information or advice that your healthcare provider has given you. This information may change as more is learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. Call your pharmacist or speak to your healthcare provider if you have any questions. * It is possible to have more than one of these conditions at the same time. * It is possible to pass infection to others even if you have no symptoms. ** still being investigated; may depend on which strain, or on severity of illness. ** It is possible to be infected and have no symptoms.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, even mild ones: please speak with a healthcare provider or use the online provincial COVID-19 self-assessment tools that can be found on [Pharmasave.com](https://www.pharmasave.com). Symptoms can be different in children than they are in adults. If you have any doubts, seek guidance from a healthcare professional. If you have **emergency warning signs** (trouble breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, newly confused, can't drink anything, can't wake up or stay awake, pale/gray/blue-coloured skin, lips or nail beds, feel very sick) **call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately**.