



## Is It COVID-19, The Flu, A Cold Or Allergies?

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As flu season approaches, it might be difficult to determine whether you have a case of the flu or COVID-19. Although they share certain symptoms, COVID-19 is more contagious and more dangerous, says Sean Drake, M.D., an internal medicine doctor with Henry Ford Health System.

“While the flu may mutate from year to year, this year’s flu is still a cousin to last year’s flu,” says Dr. Drake. “That means we have some natural immunity to it, along with effective therapy and vaccines to prevent and treat it. But our immune systems are not equipped to deal with COVID-19 because we haven’t seen it before. And unfortunately, because it’s new, we don’t yet have a vaccine.”

That’s why everyone should take precautions—wear masks in public, wash your hands frequently, and practice social distancing. (Doing so will not only lessen your chances of contracting COVID-19, but also the flu, colds, and other viruses.) It’s also important to get your flu shot this season, to protect both yourself and those who are vulnerable.

But if you feel like you’re coming down with something, take note of your symptoms. Although viruses like COVID-19 can range in severity and affect people differently, Dr. Drake shares symptoms that are most typical for the novel coronavirus, influenza, the common cold and allergies.

## COVID-19

- High fever (around 102 or 103 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Cough (sometimes it can be identified as a deep, dry cough)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Headache and body aches
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

## The Common Cold

- Sinus congestion
- Stuffy nose
- Post-nasal drip
- Sore throat
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Moderate temperature (around 100 to 101 degrees Fahrenheit)

## The Flu

- High fever (around 102 or 103 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose
- Headache and/or body aches
- Fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

## Allergies

- Itchy, watery eyes (usually a defining characteristic of allergies)
- Runny nose
- Ears feeling plugged up
- Tickle in back of throat
- Sneezing
- Seasonal symptoms (if you have the same symptoms every fall and spring, it's probably not COVID-19, it's probably allergies)

While the above symptoms are those that are most common, especially in COVID-19, they can vary. “We’ve learned ‘never to say never’ when it comes to COVID-19,” says Dr. Drake. “Some people have classic symptoms, some can remain asymptomatic the entire time, some can have mild cases.”

The period of time someone with COVID-19 would see symptoms is two to 14 days after exposure. If you are worried, the best thing to do is to get tested and self isolate until receiving your results.

“A combination swab test that goes to the back of the nose can test for both the flu and COVID-19,” says Dr. Drake. “It’s the best way to determine your illness.”

If you have symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested.