


Comparing COVID-19, Flu, Common Cold and Allergies

The following table compares the characteristics and symptoms of COVID-19, influenza (flu), common cold and allergic rhinitis (allergies).

	COVID-19 (can range from mild to serious)	Influenza (Flu) (can range from mild to serious)	Common Cold	Allergic Rhinitis (Allergies)
CHARACTERISTICS				
Onset of symptoms	2-14 days after exposure	Abrupt onset	Gradual onset	Gradual onset
Symptoms progressively worsen	Yes	Yes	No	No
Symptom severity	None to severe	Severe	Mild	Mild
Duration of symptoms	Varies by person and severity	5-7 days	4 – 10 days	Varies by person
Contagious	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
SYMPTOMS				
Fever	Common (≥100°F)	Common (100°F-104°F)	Rare	Never
Chills	Possible	Common	Rare	Never
Cough	Common (usually dry)	Common (can be severe)	Common (mild to moderate)	Sometimes (dry cough, often due to PND)
Difficulty breathing	Common (with severe cases)	Sometimes	Rare	Rare (with concomitant asthma)
Headache	Sometimes	Common (often severe)	Rare	Sometimes
Muscle aches / Pains	Sometimes	Common (often severe)	Slight	Never
Weakness / Fatigue	Sometimes (progressive)	Common (often severe)	Sometimes	Rare
Extreme exhaustion	Sometimes	Common (early onset)	Never	Never
Sore throat	Possible	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes (often due to PND)
Nasal congestion	Possible	Sometimes	Common	Possible
Runny nose	Possible	Sometimes	Common	Common
Sneezing	Possible	Sometimes	Common	Common
Nausea / vomiting / diarrhea	Sometimes	Sometimes	Never	Never
New onset loss of sense of taste or smell	Sometimes (sudden and noticeable)	Sometimes (associated with nasal congestion)	Sometimes (associated with nasal congestion)	Sometimes (associated with nasal congestion)
Itchy eyes / nose / ears / throat	Never	Never	Never	Common
Watery eyes	Never	Rare	Possible	Common