

# Cold, flu, or allergy?

*Know the difference for best treatment*

You're feeling pretty lousy. You've got sniffles, sneezing, and a sore throat. Is it a cold, flu, or allergies? It can be hard to tell them apart because they share so many symptoms. But understanding the differences will help you choose the best treatment, advises the NIH News in Health.



Symptoms	COLD	FLU	ALLERGY
<b>Fever</b>	Rare	Usual, high (100-102°F), sometimes higher, especially in young children); lasts 3-4 days	Never
<b>Headache</b>	Uncommon	Common	Uncommon
<b>General Aches, Pains</b>	Slight	Usual; often severe	Never
<b>Fatigue, Weakness</b>	Sometimes	Usual, can last up to 3 weeks	Sometimes
<b>Extreme Exhaustion</b>	Never	Usual, at the beginning of the illness	Never
<b>Stuffy, Runny Nose</b>	Common	Sometimes	Common
<b>Sneezing</b>	Usual	Sometimes	Usual
<b>Sore Throat</b>	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
<b>Cough</b>	Common	Common, can become severe	Sometimes
<b>Chest Discomfort</b>	Mild to moderate	Common	Rare, except for those with allergic asthma
<b>Treatment</b>	Get plenty of rest. Stay hydrated. (Drink plenty of fluids.) Decongestants. Aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen for aches and pains	Get plenty of rest. Stay hydrated. Aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen for aches, pains, and fever. Antiviral medicines (see your doctor)	Avoid allergens (things that you're allergic to). Antihistamines. Nasal steroids. Decongestants.
<b>Prevention</b>	Wash your hands often. Avoid close contact with anyone who has a cold.	Get the flu vaccine each year. Wash your hands often. Avoid contact with anyone who has the flu.	Avoid allergens, such as pollen, house dust mites, mold, pet dander, cockroaches.
<b>Complications</b>	Sinus infection, middle ear infection, asthma	Bronchitis, pneumonia; can be life-threatening	Sinus infection, middle ear infection, asthma