

Common Respiratory Illnesses

Symptom	COVID-19	Influenza	Pertussis	Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)
Fever	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	Uncommon If present, typically low-grade	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days
Chills	Common	Common	Uncommon	Uncommon
Headache	Common	Common	Uncommon	Uncommon
Muscle aches; chest discomfort	Common; mild to severe	Common; often severe	Uncommon	Uncommon
Fatigue and weakness	Mild-severe; Extreme exhaustion common	Moderate-severe; Extreme exhaustion common in early illness	Mild; Patient usually appears well between coughing attacks	Mild
Stuffy or runny nose	Common	Common	Common early in the illness	Common
Sneezing	Uncommon	Uncommon	Common early in the illness	Common, 1-3 days after symptom onset
Sore throat	Common	Common	Uncommon	Common
Other symptoms	Vomiting, diarrhea, loss of taste and smell	Vomiting, diarrhea (more common in children)	Apnea – a pause in breathing (in infants)	Wheezing, decrease in appetite

COUGH	Character	Non-productive (“dry”), persistent cough	Dry cough is typical	Coughing fits/paroxysms and nocturnal cough are common; often leads to vomiting or gagging; generally not responsive to over the counter cough medications; “whooping” may occur	Dry cough, often with wheezing
	Severity	Mild to severe	Moderate to severe	Variable; infants appear quite ill and may present with cough or apnea	Severe
	Duration	Typically 3-7 days, may last for weeks or months	Typically 3-7 days	Typically >1 week, usually 2-6 weeks, sometimes months	Typically 3-7 days, may last for weeks

Infectious period	2 days before symptom onset up to 10 days after	1 day before symptom onset and 3-4 days after with some contagious for slightly longer	From the start of the very first symptoms to 21 days after cough onset*	May start 1-2 days before symptom onset for 3-8 days
Incubation period	2-14 days	1-4 days	6-20 days	4-6 days
Vaccines available	COVID-19 vaccines, updated regularly	Seasonal influenza vaccine	DTaP and Tdap	Vaccines available for older adults; immunizations available to protect infants and toddlers
Available diagnostic testing	Antigen or PCR	Antigen or PCR	PCR recommended for acute illness	Antigen or PCR for acute illness

*or until taking 5 days of appropriate antibiotics, or until a nasopharyngeal pertussis PCR is negative

For more information:
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