

# Influenza vs. Colds vs. Pertussis

Symptom	Influenza (“Flu”)	Colds (Viral Upper Respiratory Infection)	Pertussis
<b>Fever</b>	Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically	Uncommon If present, typically low-grade	Uncommon If present, typically low-grade
<b>Chills</b>	Common	Uncommon	Rare
<b>Headache</b>	Very common	Uncommon	Uncommon
<b>Aches and pains, muscle aches, chest discomfort</b>	Very common; Often severe	Slight to Moderate	Uncommon
<b>Fatigue and weakness</b>	Moderate-severe; can last up to 14-21 days	Mild	Mild; Patient usually appears well between coughing attacks
<b>Extreme exhaustion</b>	Very common early in illness	Extremely rare	Rare
<b>Stuffy or runny nose</b>	Common	Very common	Common, early in the disease
<b>Sneezing</b>	Sometimes	Common	Common, early in the disease
<b>Sore throat</b>	Common	Common	Uncommon

<b>C O U G H</b>	<b>Character</b>	Non-productive (“dry”) cough is typical	Hacking cough, often productive; usually responds to cough medications	Coughing fits/paroxysms and nocturnal cough are common; often leads to vomiting or gagging; generally not responsive to cough medications; “whooping” may or may not occur
	<b>Severity</b>	Moderate	Mild to moderate	Variable; mild to severe; infants appear quite ill and may present with cough or apnea
	<b>Duration</b>	Typically 3-7 days; occasionally to 14 days	Typically 3-7 days	Persistent cough, almost always >1 week, usually 2-6 weeks, sometimes 10+ weeks
	<b>Paroxysms</b>	Uncommon	Rare	Coughing fits are common; often leads to vomiting or gagging

<b>Infectious Period</b>	1 day before symptom onset and 3-7 days after	Variable; typically 4-7 days after symptom onset; can be longer	From start of catarrhal phase (before cough onset) to 21 days after cough onset*; Most efficient spreading after cough onset
<b>Incubation Period</b>	1-5 days	1-4 days	6-20 days

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