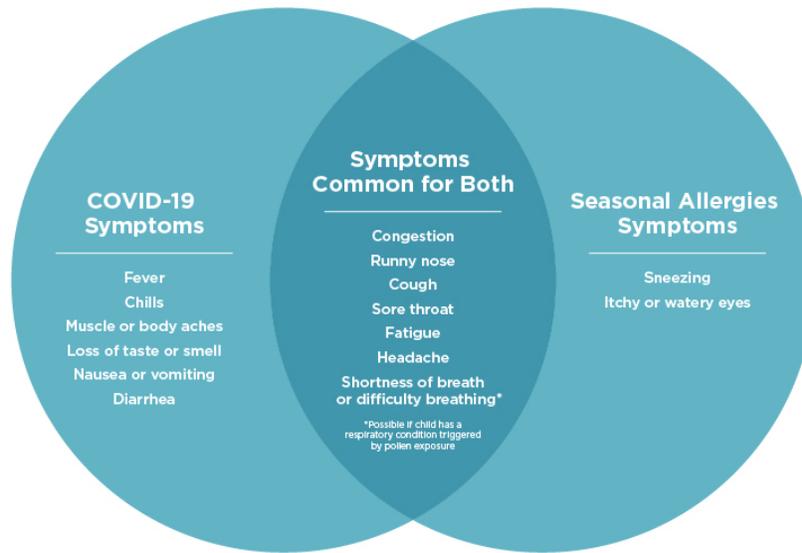




Is it allergies or COVID-19?



This is the time of year that many people struggle with seasonal allergies. How can they distinguish those symptoms from COVID-19?

For kids and adults with seasonal allergies, this is the time of year when they may be experiencing respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing and coughing. Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in adults and children and can look like symptoms of other common illnesses such as colds, strep throat, or allergies. Allergies and viral symptoms can be similar but there are some key differences. For example, think about the timeline. Does your child always have problems this time of the year? Think about or have your pediatrician check back to see if your child came in for a visit the same time last year with the same symptoms.

- Itchy, runny nose, sneezing,
- coughing
- Itchy, watery eyes. Redness
- Itchy, sensitive skin, rash or hives– swelling
- Shortness of breath, cough,
- wheeze, chest tightness

Second, check for fever. Allergies do not cause fever, but it could be a [COVID-19 symptom](#), along with these other symptoms that can appear 2-14 days after a COVID-19 exposure:

- Cough
- Fever or chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Nausea or vomiting
- Congestion or runny nose

Last, check if your child is itchy. Children with allergies are typically rubbing their eyes or noses more, especially during this time of year. It's important to speak with your pediatrician about all of the symptoms your child is experiencing. Because some of the symptoms of COVID-19 and seasonal allergies are similar, it may be difficult to tell the difference between them, and you may need to get a test to confirm your diagnosis.

If someone has a history of seasonal allergies, what should they do to avoid them being sent home from school for these symptoms?

Many symptoms of seasonal allergies overlap with COVID-19 symptoms. Both conditions can cause:

- Congestion
- Runny Nose
- Coughing
- Sore Throat
- Fatigue
- Headache

If your child is sick and you aren't sure if it's allergies or a virus, you should keep him or her home. Since the symptoms are similar with both, making sure your child does not spread a virus around school is the right thing to do. Many kids are prescribed or given over-the-counter antihistamines for their seasonal allergies. Most families don't give it every day or during the winter since the allergy symptoms aren't present. Speak with your pediatrician first, but as pollen/allergy season approaches your child's physician might suggest giving your child his or her medicines regularly before the season starts and throughout to help minimize the symptoms.

What else can families do to help decrease allergy symptoms?

You can reduce your child's seasonal allergy symptoms by limiting their exposure to pollens.

[Take steps to minimize allergy symptoms](#), including:

- Staying indoors and keeping windows and doors closed during the peak pollen season

- Using a HEPA filter
- Vacuuming frequently
- Washing clothes and bathing after spending time outdoors
- Washing cloth masks after each use as the mask might carry pollen particles
- Using an over-the-counter saline nasal rinse or spray (to flush out pollens)
- Wearing a mask might also prevent kids from inhaling some of the larger pollen particles that can trigger allergy symptoms.

Taking these simple steps may be even more helpful during the pandemic, as any cough or congestion can be cause for concern.

Symptoms of allergies and mild COVID-19 infections can be similar. How can we know for sure if it is allergies or COVID-19?

If your child has an alternative diagnosis of seasonal allergies and your child is experiencing allergy symptoms, it's best to speak with your school nurse before sending them to school. Symptoms of allergies and mild COVID-19 infections can be similar, and it can be hard to distinguish between the two without testing. In most cases, testing will be advised and can be done at school by the school nurse, free of charge. Results are typically available within 24-48 hours. Parent consent is required.

If your child does not have an alternative diagnosis of allergies, your child must be tested for COVID-19 or remain at home for 10 days. If their test is negative, they should stay at home until symptoms go away for 48 hours. They must also be fever-free for 48 hours without Tylenol or other fever-reducing medication before returning to school. Speak with the school nurse if you have questions about when your child can return to school. Your child's absence will be excused, but your child is encouraged to participate in remote learning if they are able to.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#People-with-Seasonal-Allergies>

<https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/fight-seasonal-allergies>

[https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\)](https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Coronavirus-(COVID-19))