

Influenza vs. Cold vs. Pertussis

Symptom		Influenza ("Flu")	Colds (Viral URI)	Pertussis
Fever		Usually present & high (102-104°F or 39-40°C); typically lasts 3-4 days	Uncommon If present, typically low-grade	Uncommon If present, typically low-grade
Chills		Common	Uncommon	Rare
Headache		Very common	Uncommon	Uncommon
Aches and pains, muscle aches, chest discomfort		Very common Often severe	Slight to Moderate	Uncommon
Fatigue and weakness		Moderate - severe; can last up to 14-21 days	Mild	Mild; Usually appears well between coughing attacks
Extreme exhaustion		Very common early in illness	Extremely Rare	Rare
Stuffy or runny nose		Common	Very common	Common, early in the disease
Sneezing		Sometimes	Common	Common, early in the disease
Sore throat		Common	Common	Uncommon
Cough	Character	Non-productive ("dry") cough is typical	Hacking cough, often productive; usually responds to cough medications	Variable character; fits / paroxysms and nocturnal cough are common; generally not responsive to cough medications; "whooping" may or may not occur
	Severity	Moderate	Mild to Moderate	Variable; mild to severe; infants appear quite ill and may present with cough or apnea
	Duration	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
	Paroxysms (coughing fits)	Uncommon	Rare	Common; often leads to vomiting or gagging
Infectious Period		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) to 21 days after cough onset* Most efficient spreading after cough onset

*or until taking 5 days of appropriate anti-pertussis antibiotics