

Influenza vs. Colds 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; Patient 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 2-8 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 onset) to 21 days after cough onset* Most efficient spreading after cough onset |

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