

# Know the Difference

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), Cold, Flu and COVID-19



Common symptoms of all four illnesses include fever, cough, feeling tired, runny nose and congestion. It can be hard to tell these viruses apart, but here are some clues to help:

Symptom	RSV Most often affects young children and the elderly with slow start of symptoms that are usually the worst by days 3 to 5	Cold Gradual onset of symptoms	Flu Rapid onset of symptoms; more severe symptoms in young children and the elderly	COVID-19 Gradual onset of symptoms that may differ based on the type of COVID-19
Wheezing	X			
Sneezing	X	X	X	
Not Eating Well	X		X	X
Sore Throat		X	X	X
Headache / Body Aches			X	X
Fever			X	X
Sudden Loss of Taste or Smell				X

*\*Note: This chart should be used as a starting point. Symptoms can vary. If your child is sick, talk with your doctor about testing and treatment.*

## Call the doctor right away if your child:

- Shows sign of dehydration (peeing less than once every 8 hours, not making tears when crying, dryness of the tongue or inside the mouth)
- Has bloody diarrhea
- Is vomiting for more than 24 hours
- Has chronic health problems such as a heart condition, lung disease or a weakened immune system
- Is younger than 3 months (12 weeks) old and has a fever of 100.4° F or higher
  - Children 3–24 months: Call the doctor during office hours for a fever of 100.4°F or higher that lasts for 24 hours
  - Children 2 years and older: Call the doctor during office hours for a fever of 100.4°F or higher that lasts for 72 hours (3 days)

## Go to the Emergency Department if your child:

- Is extremely fussy or irritable and cannot be comforted
- Looks very ill, is not responding to your voice, is extremely sleepy or hard to wake up
- Has trouble breathing that does not get better when you suction their nose (pulling in at ribs, breathing fast or hard, wheezing, grunting, has blue lips, tongue, or nails)

*The risk of severe disease can be lessened for some respiratory viruses. Ask your doctor if your child can get the RSV immunization or vaccinations against the flu and COVID-19.*