

Influenza vs. Cold vs. Pertussis

Symptom		Influenza ("Flu")	Colds (Viral URI)	Pertussis
Fever		Common & usually high (102-104°F); typically lasts 3-4 days	Rare, if present, typically low-grade	Rare, if present, typically low-grade
Headache		Very common, sudden onset	Rare	Rare
Muscle aches		Very common, often severe	Mild	Rare
Fatigue and weakness		Moderate - severe; can last up to 14-21 days	Mild	Mild
Extreme exhaustion		Very common early in illness	Extremely Rare	Rare
Stuffy or runny nose		Common	Very common	Common, early in the disease
Sneezing		Common	Common	Common, early in the disease
Sore throat		Common	Common	Rare
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-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)	Rare	Rare	Common; often leads to vomiting (post-tussive) 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

Source: Iowa Department of Public Health 12/10/04

