

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection Comparison Chart
Ah-choo! Is it a Cold, Hay Fever, Sinusitis or the Flu?



| Name | Symptoms | Causes | Onset & duration of symptoms | Prevention | Treatment |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| Common Cold ("Head Cold") | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No fever No aches and pains Still have an appetite Sore throat Runny, stuffy nose Sneezing Most prominent symptoms are in the nose | More than 200 different viruses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rhinovirus (nose virus) RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) Corona viruses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually comes on gradually Most common Sept-April Adults will get 2-4 colds/year Children will get up to 12 colds/year Colds are a powerful asthma trigger Lasts about one week | Frequent hand washing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bed rest & plenty of fluids Acetaminophen or aspirin for headache/ fever See a physician if cold lasts more than 10 days |
| Flu (Influenza) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudden fever, chills Aching muscles and joints Headache Severe malaise Dry cough & lack of appetite Blocked and/or runny nose Your "whole body" feels sick | Viruses, spread by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sneezed or coughed droplets into the air from an infected person Cold & dry weather, as people spend more time close together indoors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually comes on suddenly Lasts about a week | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly recommended to get a flu shot to prevent the flu, especially if history of asthma, recurrent ear infections, and sinusitis. Best time for flu shot is Oct - Nov | Most people recover without treatment |
| Allergic Rhinitis ("Hay Fever") | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No fever Congestion Runny or stuffy nose (clear, white thin mucus) Sneezing Itchy nose, throat and eyes Cough is rare | Exposure to irritants/triggers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dust mites Animal dander Pollen Mould spores | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weeks, months or all year. Symptoms last as long as you are exposed to the allergen. | Avoid triggers; for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove carpeting to reduce dust mites and mould Air conditioning may help reduce mould Use mattress and pillow covers to reduce dust mites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Antihistamines Intranasal steroids Immunotherapy may help |
| Non-allergic Rhinitis ("Vasomotor Rhinitis") | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sneezing Runny nose No fever | Exposure to irritants/triggers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tobacco smoke Cold air Alcohol Perfume | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms occur directly following exposure to irritants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid triggers, especially second-hand tobacco smoke | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tends to get better when not exposed to trigger(s) |
| Sinusitis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thick yellowish/green nasal discharge Facial tenderness Headache Congestion Fatigue Fever | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caused by bacterial infection in most cases Usually occurs as a late complication of a common cold Those with asthma/allergies may also be predisposed to the development of sinusitis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can last weeks, months or even years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sinus drainage medications (e.g. decongestants) during times of increased susceptibility, such as flu and cold season | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhaled nasal corticosteroids Decongestants Antibiotics to control a bacterial infection, if present Pain relievers to reduce any pain or fever Steam inhalations and/or nasal saline washes |