

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

MENU >

WEAR A MASK. PROTECT OTHERS.

COVID-19 and Seasonal Allergies FAQs People with Seasonal Allergies

Updated Aug. 12, 2020

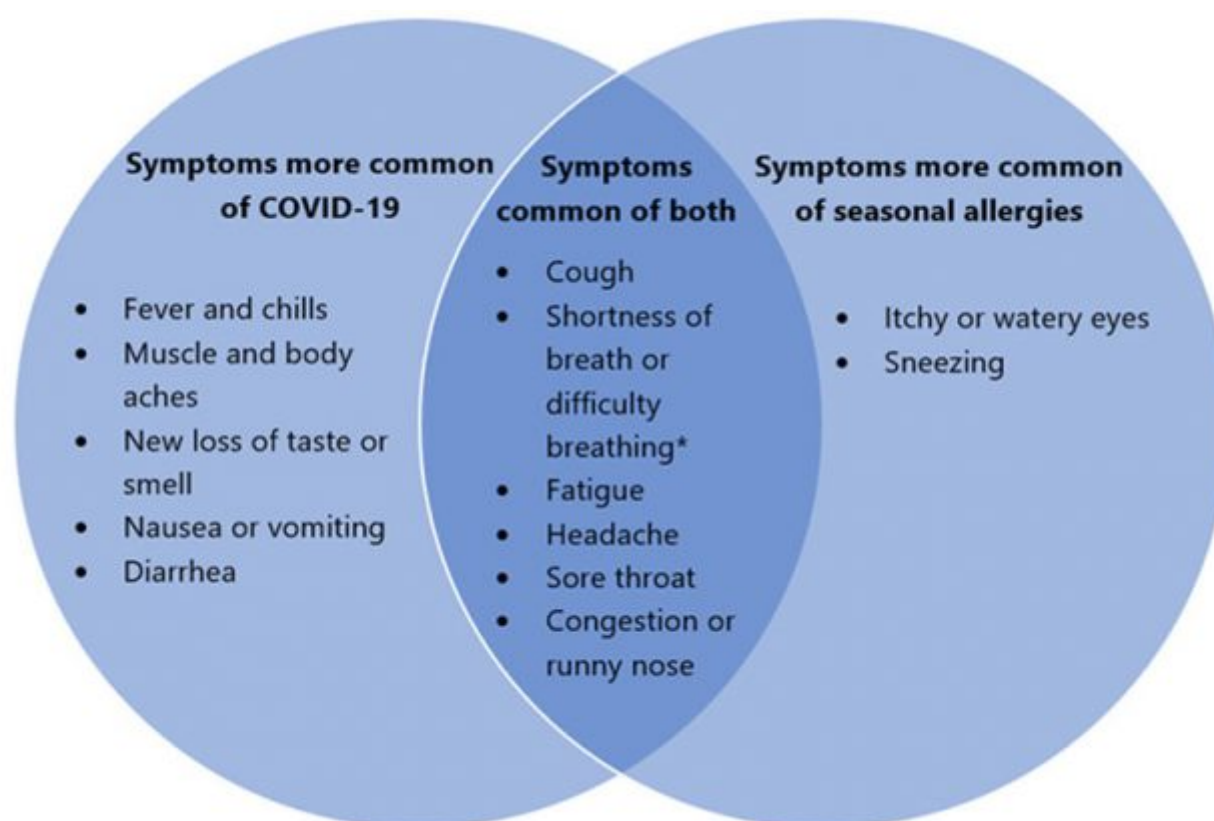
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What is the difference between COVID-19 and seasonal allergies?

COVID-19 is a contagious respiratory illness caused by infection with a new coronavirus (called SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19). Seasonal allergies triggered by airborne pollen can lead to seasonal allergic rhinitis, which affects the nose and sinuses, and seasonal allergic conjunctivitis, which affects the eyes.

COVID-19 and seasonal allergies share many symptoms, but there are some key differences between the two. For example, COVID-19 can cause fever, which is not a common symptom of seasonal allergies. The image below compares symptoms caused by allergies and COVID-19.

Because some of the symptoms of COVID-19 and seasonal allergies are similar, it may be difficult to tell the difference between them, and you may need to get a test to confirm your diagnosis.



**Seasonal allergies do not usually cause shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, unless a person has a respiratory condition such as asthma that can be triggered by exposure to pollen.*

This is not a complete list of all possible symptoms of COVID-19 or seasonal allergies. Symptoms vary from person to person and range from mild to severe. You can have symptoms of both COVID-19 and seasonal allergies at the same time.

If you think you have COVID-19, follow CDC's guidance on ["What to do if you are sick."](#) If you have **an emergency warning sign** (including trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately.

Get more information on [COVID-19 symptoms](#) or more information on [seasonal allergy symptoms](#) 

Does having seasonal allergies increase my risk of contracting COVID-19 or having more severe symptoms if I do contract COVID-19?

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There is not enough scientific information at this time to know whether having seasonal allergies puts you at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 or having more severe symptoms if you do contract COVID-19. We do know that older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like obesity, diabetes, or heart or lung disease are at higher risk for developing more serious complications when they have COVID-19. Get more information on people at [high risk for severe COVID-19](#).

Will I be protected from seasonal allergies if I wear a mask?

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CDC recommends wearing [masks](#) to slow the spread of COVID-19. Everyone should wear a mask covering unless they are under 2 years of age, have breathing problems, or are unconscious or incapacitated and would need assistance removing a mask. Masks also offer some protection against seasonal allergies because they can prevent some larger particles from being inhaled. However, if you have seasonal allergies, masks should not be your only protection against pollen exposure because smaller particles can still get through the covering and be inhaled.





Wash your masks after each use, particularly if you suffer from seasonal allergies, because the covering may carry particles such as pollen. See information on how to [wash masks](#).

How can I protect myself from seasonal allergies?

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The best way to protect yourself against seasonal allergies is to reduce your exposure to pollen. During high pollen days:

- Limit your time outdoors and seek indoor spaces with clean air.
- Create a cleaner air space at home to protect yourself from outdoor air irritants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Use a portable air cleaner in one or more rooms. Portable air cleaners work best when run continuously with doors and windows closed. [Do-it-yourself box fan](#) filtration units are a low-cost filtration alternative, but they should never be left unattended.
- Keep your cleaner air space a comfortable temperature by using air conditioners, heat pumps, fans, and window shades.
- If you have a forced air system in your home, consult a qualified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional about different filters (HEPA or MERV-13 or higher) and settings ("Recirculate" and "On" rather than "Auto") that can be used to reduce indoor air irritants.
- If outdoors, avoid activities that stir up pollen, such as mowing lawns or raking leaves. When you return indoors, take a shower and change your clothes.

The EPA website on [indoor air and COVID-19](#)  and the [EPA Guide to Air Cleaners in the Home](#)   provide additional information on improving indoor air quality. You can also find out the daily pollen levels in your area by checking local weather forecasts and [pollen counting stations](#) . Learn more about [reducing your exposure to respiratory triggers](#).

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