

## Factsheet 7

Updated on 28 May 2020

## COVID-19 vs. Allergic Rhinitis

People with asthma may have difficulty in assessing whether the symptoms they are experiencing are of COVID-19, worsening of their asthma or of allergic rhinitis. What are the main differences between these symptoms?

### What are COVID-19 symptoms?

People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms. These range from mild symptoms to severe illness. These symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus

The main symptoms include:

- Persistent cough
- Fever

A further number of symptoms have been identified as the virus has spread. These include:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sputum production
- Sore throat

(Please note: The list does not include all possible symptoms).

Other less common symptoms have been reported, including gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea.

### What are Allergic Rhinitis symptoms?

Allergic rhinitis is usually worse between late March and September and when the weather is warm, humid and windy. During these times the pollen count is at its highest. Different people have allergies to different pollen for example, grass pollen and tree pollen.



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Grass pollen is the most common allergy and affects up to 90 per cent of people with allergic rhinitis.

Typical symptoms of allergic rhinitis:

- Sneezing
- New continuous cough
- A runny nose
- A blocked nose
- Red and watery eyes
- Itchy nose, mouth, throat, eyes and ears
- Loss of smell
- Pain around the temples and forehead
- Headache

Key differences between allergic rhinitis and COVID-19?

- One of the most useful differentiating factors between the two conditions is a fever. Fever would present in an Infection and not allergic rhinitis.
- Palatal and Eustachian tube itch is a feature of allergic rhinitis
- Allergic rhinitis is not contagious unlike COVID-19

Allergic rhinitis symptoms tend to be milder and fluctuate depending on the time of day as pollen levels are often higher in the morning and late evening. For example, people may experience milder allergic rhinitis symptoms in wet weather since pollen is washed away. This differs with COVID-19 symptoms which do not fluctuate upon the time of day.

For more details around how you can support people manage their allergic rhinitis symptoms listen to our podcast on the 28th May which will be available on our website [here](#).

References:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available from:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Hay-fever/>