

COVID-19 FAQ: People with Seasonal Allergies

- 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.

Symptoms more common of COVID-19:

- Fever and chills
- Muscle and body aches
- New Loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Symptoms common of both:

- Cough
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Congestion or running nose

Symptoms more common of seasonal allergies:

- Itchy or watery eyes
- Sneezing

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

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

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.

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

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.

- How can I protect myself from seasonal allergies?

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.