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Understanding the symptoms of Covid-19, common cold and allergy

Ever since the pandemic broke out, some of my friends and family have been calling whenever they get a cough, runny nose, or sore throat. Of course, most of them are scared and stressed, and want to be reassured whether the symptoms point to a virus infection.

And that concern is perfectly natural. Which is why, to ease your mental burden, I want to point out some differences between an allergy/the common cold and Covid-19.

First of all, let's start with the common cold. Anyone and everyone can get a common cold. The symptoms are a runny nose with stuffy or blocked feeling, sneezing, watery eyes, a sore throat and sometimes a low-grade fever with a sense of being unwell.

The cough that we get with a cold is usually mild and has sputum with it. A cold usually lasts 7-10 days and goes away with

IS IT A COLD OR THE FLU ?



COLD	FLU
LOSS OF APPETITE	MUSCLE PAIN
SORE THROAT	HIGH FEVER
SNEEZING	HEADACHE
COUGH	FATIGUE
VOMITING	CHILLS

and if necessary, oral medications. For these patients, my advice is to keep your medications on hand.

Now, about Covid-19. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the major symptoms are high fever, cough which is dry, and breathlessness, which is mild at first but gets worse with passing time. The cough is a persistent one and nothing will come out— i.e. there will be no sputum. Along with this, the patient will feel exhausted, lose appetite, and become weak.

The latest study also says patient may develop loss of smell, experience diarrhoea, and difficulty in breathing, when the infection gets worse.

If you have a fever above 101 degrees for more than few days with cough and breathlessness, start taking paracetamol to control the fever. Isolate yourself to a room with attached bathroom facilities, and maintain quarantine from other members of the house. If the symptoms persist and get worse, contact your doctor, who will then advise if you need to get tested. The important thing to remember is that even if you have Covid-19, most patients recover on their own. A very small percentage of infected patients need hospitalisation.

A few weeks ago, travel history was very important, but now, as the spread is community wise, we just have to be extra careful with our contacts and where we are going. Wearing masks is very important when we are around other people, along with social distancing and frequent hand-washing.

Keep a sanitiser with you at all times if you need to be out of the house, to avoid cross contamination through various surfaces, even money.

Photo: Collected

or without medication. The fever is low grade or absent in common colds. Simple paracetamols with antihistamines will cure it.

In case of allergic rhinitis, the patient usually knows they have the allergies, yet they could forget that they had the same symptoms last year too! Usually, allergy symptoms can include sneezing with a runny nose, watery eyes, an itchy throat, but rarely a cough. This happens when exposed to dust, or some smell, or foods. It may also be triggered by weather changes like rain,

heat, or cold. Allergies do not cause a fever.

Patients with allergic rhinitis should start their regular anti-allergic meds if they get an episode. This will help to reduce or even control the situation.

If this is new to you, try taking simple antihistamines, which are available over the counter or consult with your doctor over the phone.

Some patients with asthma are also worried when they are getting attacks, but please do not panic. Start your usual inhaler

