

Compare symptoms

Influenza, a cold, and stomach upset are different illnesses

The chart below shows the differences between influenza, a cold and a stomach upset.

Type of infection	Respiratory infection		Gastrointestinal infection
Description / symptoms	Influenza	Common cold	Stomach upset*
Virus involved	Influenza A or B	Many different kinds of viruses such as rhinovirus, coronavirus, adenovirus, etc.	Norovirus (Norwalk-like viruses) is the most common.
Fever	Usually high, beginning suddenly and lasting 3–4 days.	Sometimes	Rarely
Headache	Usually, can be severe.	Rarely	Sometimes
Chills, aches, pain	Usually, and often severe.	Rarely	Common
Loss of appetite	Sometimes.	Sometimes	Frequently – usually nausea, vomiting and diarrhea occur as well.
Cough	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rarely
Sniffles or sneezes	Sometimes	Usually	Rarely
Extreme tiredness	Usually – tiredness may last 2–3 weeks or more.	Rarely	Sometimes
Involves whole body	Usually	Never	Stomach and bowel only.
Symptoms appear quickly	Yes	More gradual	Yes
Possible Complications (Health problems)	Pneumonia, kidney failure, swelling of the brain and death.	Sinus infection or ear infection.	Dehydration (losing more fluid than you take in).
Vaccine	Yearly vaccine provides protection against two influenza A strains and one influenza B strain.	No vaccine available.	No vaccine available.

* **Note:** A stomach upset is sometimes incorrectly called the "stomach flu" – there is no such illness as "stomach flu." As noted in the chart, stomach upsets are caused by viruses and other micro-organisms but not by the influenza virus.