



# What is this Tripledemic? COVID, FLU, and RSV

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**A**n early wave of kids' infections this fall and winter has hit us hard. It is being called a "tripledeemic." A spike in *COVID*, *FLU* (*Influenza*), *RSV* and other children's infections has contributed to overcrowded offices, emergency departments and hospitals.

**T**wo years of wearing facemasks, remote learning, social distancing, and other *COVID* prevention strategies helped protect kids through the pandemic. But as masks come off and activities go back to normal, children are left vulnerable to many common viruses. It may seem like your child is "sick all the time"!

**S**o what's causing your child's runny nose, cough and fever? Some *COVID*, *Flu*, *RSV* and cold symptoms are alike. They share many symptoms so it can be hard to tell them apart. But here are some clues:

**COVID** symptoms can include fever, cough, fatigue, congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, headache, sneezing, vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of taste/smell. *COVID* symptoms can appear 2 to 14 days after infection. We will monitor for "Long *COVID*" and *MIS-C* (Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children). Quarantine for a minimum of 5 days and until fever and symptoms are gone.

**FLU** (*influenza*) symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy nose, shortness of breath, sore throat, headache. Symptoms show up about 1 to 4 days after being exposed to a sick person. Pneumonia and ear infections are common secondary infections. You can return to school and activities when you feel well and have no fever for 24 hours.

**RSV** can cause fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy nose, and sneezing. In more severe cases fast, short breaths, flaring nostrils, wheezing and grunting can occur. We need to know if with each breath the chest "caves in" between and under the ribs, known as retracting. Poor feeding and loss of appetite must also be monitored.

**S**ymptoms of *RSV* usually peak on days 3 through 5 and last about 5 to 7 days, with the cough lasting several weeks. It is common from late fall through early spring. Nearly all children get *RSV* by their second birthday and then have a milder case as they get older. Most children with *RSV* will do well. We worry most about *RSV* in

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premature infants and infants with lung or heart conditions. Asthma treatments don't work for the wheezing of *RSV* (see page 3). A child with *RSV* can return to daycare about 8 days after symptoms begin.

**"Common cold"** symptoms may include fever, cough, fatigue, stuffy nose, sore throat, and sneezing. Colds are upper respiratory infections that can be caused by many viruses. A few common cold viruses are *rhinovirus*, *adenovirus*, other "non-COVID" coronaviruses, *human parainfluenza virus*, *human metapneumovirus* and more. Healthy children get about 6 colds a year. Healthy infants and toddlers get about 10 colds just in fall through spring! Whew!

**Strep throat** is a bacterial illness which can cause heart disease (rheumatic fever) if untreated. It is very rare under age 18 months. *Strep* can cause fever, sore throat, headache, and upper abdominal pain. Bad cough and runny nose are not usually **not strep** symptoms. A throat culture in the office may be needed to be sure.

## Prevention is best!

**V**accines are an effective tool to prevent serious illness from the *FLU*, *COVID* and other vaccine-preventable diseases. Your child's risk of hospitalization is dramatically lower if vaccinated. Staying up to date on routine immunizations also helps others. Protection from vaccines helps your child and others at risk of serious problems from *FLU* and *COVID*.

**E**veryone 6 months and older should get *FLU* vaccine each year. Best to get your flu shot by the end of October, but the winter months are not too late! Waves of *FLU* can occur until the end of May.

**E**veryone 6 months or older should receive *COVID* vaccinations as well. See our *COVID* vaccine video on our homepage ([www.clarkstownpeds.com](http://www.clarkstownpeds.com)). We are vaccinating in our offices.

**T**here is no vaccine for *RSV* or the common cold. For *RSV*, some infants who are at risk of serious problems can receive an injectable medicine called *palivizumab (synagis)*. It protects babies who were born significantly premature, had a heart defect or weak immune system. It is given once a month for 5 fall/winter months.

**A**s we learned from the pandemic, there are many tools to help stop viruses from spreading. Children should learn to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze (and then put the tissue in the trash right away). Wearing a mask help prevent *COVID*, *FLU* and other viruses from spreading. And everyone should be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

**I**f your child is sick and you have any questions or concerns about their symptoms, don't hesitate to call us. We are doing our best to keep up with your concerns during this "tripledeemic" and we appreciate how understanding you have all been while waiting with your sick or healthy children.

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