

# CORONAVIRUS, FLU, COLD?

As the number of coronavirus cases rise, some key differences set coronavirus apart from the seasonal flu and the common cold — mainly the intensity of the symptoms and the recovery period. A guide at identifying the differences in the three conditions. All three, however, are spread by air-borne respiratory droplets and contaminated surfaces

## CORONAVIRUS

**Onset:** Sudden

### Symptoms

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Muscle ache
- Fatigue

### Less common symptoms

- Headache
- Coughing up blood (haemoptysis)
- Diarrhoea

**Incubation:**  
**1-14 days,**  
may go up to 24 days

**Complications:**  
**5% cases**  
(acute pneumonia, respiratory failure, septic shock, multiple organ failure)

**Recovery:**  
**2 weeks**  
(mild cases); 2-6 weeks (severe cases)

**Treatment or vaccine**  
No vaccines or anti-viral drugs available; only symptoms can be treated

## SEASONAL FLU

**Onset:** Abrupt

### Symptoms

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Muscle ache
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose

### Less common symptoms

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting

**WHAT THIS MEANS** If you have a stuffy/runny nose or are sneezing, you likely **DO NOT** have coronavirus

**Incubation:**  
**1-4 days**

**Complications:**  
**1% cases**  
(including pneumonia)

**Recovery:**  
**1 week**  
(mild cases);  
2 weeks (severe cases)

**Treatment/vaccine**  
An annual seasonal flu vaccine is available

## COMMON COLD

**Onset:** Gradual

### Symptoms

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sneezing
- Sore throat

### Less common symptoms

- Low grade fever
- Muscle or body ache
- Headache
- Fatigue

**Incubation:**  
**2-3 days**

**Complications:**  
**Extremely rare**

**Recovery:**  
**1 week**  
for most cases; may last as long as 10 days

**Treatment/vaccine**  
No treatment, but doctors advise treating symptoms

## SEVEN KINDS OF CORONA

Seven strains of coronavirus (CoV) that infect humans have been identified. These cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV)

### Harmless

- Serotype 229E
- Serotype OC43
- Serotype NL63
- Serotype HKU1

These cause symptoms of the common cold, and rarely cause severe pneumonia

### Dangerous

These are known to cause more severe disease. These are:

1. **Sars-CoV** which causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars)
2. **Mers-CoV** was that causes Middle East respiratory syndrome (Mers)
3. **Sars-CoV2** that causes coronavirus disease (Covid-19)

## The unknowns of Sars-CoV2

**Sars-CoV2** is closely related (with 88% identity) to two bat-derived Sars-like coronaviruses (bat-SL-CoV-ZC45 and bat-SL-CoV-ZXC21) collected in 2018 in Zhoushan, eastern China

It has **79%** genetic affinity with Sars-CoV, 50% with Mers-CoV

The **Sars-CoV2** receptor-binding domain structure, which allows a virus to latch on to and enter a cell, is similar to Sars-CoV, despite amino acid variation at some key residues. Little is known about **Sars-CoV2**, studies on Sars-CoV provide clues to its behaviour and ability to infect

On smooth surfaces such as tables, phones etc, Sars-CoV retains its viability for 5 days at 22-25°C and relative humidity of 40-50%, which is typical for air-conditioned rooms. Though this may vary for Sars-CoV2, experts say this is a good indicator for its behaviour

