Cold? Flu? Allergies? Or is it COVID-19?

Coughing, sneezing, and a fever—you are feeling sick. It's natural to feel anxious about your symptoms—you may wonder if you have a cold, the flu, allergies or something much more serious like COVID-19. Coronavirus, flu, cold, and allergies can have similar symptoms—making it difficult to tell the difference. But don't panic. Take a few minutes to look at the symptoms you have so you know when to call the doctor.

Let's start with the Common Cold. A cold is caused by a virus. Symptoms of a cold include runny nose, sneezing, sore throat and cough. Your symptoms may be mild. The flu is also caused by a virus. If you have the flu you may notice symptoms such as: runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and a cough. Flu can also include muscle or body aches, headaches and tiredness. And you may have a fever. Older people and those with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease can develop more serious flu complications like pneumonia.

If you have allergies, your symptoms include a runny nose, sneezing, wheezing, itchy, watery eyes and itchy nose, throat, and ears. Now let's look at the symptoms for COVID-19 caused by the Coronavirus. The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever, shortness of breath, chills, body aches and fatigue. Some people report a loss of taste and smell. These symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure to coronavirus.

In severe cases, complications include pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and death. Many of the symptoms of cold, flu and allergies can seem like COVID-19 and it can be confusing. But the important difference is the most common symptom of coronavirus is fever.

It's important to monitor your symptoms. If you think you may have COVID-19, or your symptoms of cold, flu, or allergies are getting worse and you need relief, call your healthcare provider. But make sure to call before going into their office or emergency room and let them know your symptoms. If you do have COVID-19, you could infect others spreading the virus to your community.

Be honest about your symptoms, follow the advice of your healthcare provider and get the treatment you need. For more information on the symptoms of COVID-19 go to www.cdc.gov.