

Safety Newsletter



Central Region
School Insurance Group

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Allergies vs Cold vs Flu vs COVID-19?

How to Tell the Difference:

Spring has come and the excitement of being able to experience outdoor activities is hard to suppress. However, for many, being outdoors can bring on unpleasant symptoms. The spring season brings beautiful blooming plants, flowers and.....pollen! Seasonal allergies are caused by pollen being released into the air, causing some to have an allergic reaction with symptoms, often to refer to as hay fever. Allergy experts say we should brace ourselves for one of the worse allergy seasons this year. California has just wrapped up a warmer than normal winter which has lead to pollen being released well ahead of schedule, and as a result, allergy season has started earlier. This trend actually has been happening for the last few years and the pollen seems to be releasing earlier, longer, and creating a more intense season for those who are affected.

Although, COVID-19 infection rates are on a downward trend, it is still a cause for concern along with the cold and flu that may still be circulating. Unfortunately, COVID-19 symptoms can look similar to many other conditions, including seasonal allergies. Many people who are allergic to trees and grasses may be worried that they could have the Coronavirus. So, what do you have and how can you tell the difference between allergies, cold, flu, and Covid-19?

With the onset of any symptoms, it is always a good idea to start off with taking your temperature. COVID-

19 almost always includes a fever. If your temperature is normal, it can likely just be allergies. Also, ask yourself if these symptoms happen to you every year. Come March and April, do you usually have itchy eyes and a runny nose? If so, this may just be seasonal allergies acting up versus COVID-19.

Trying to tell the difference between the cold, flu or COVID-19 may be trickier. Early signs of cold, flu and COVID-19 are similar. Whereas both COVID-19 and the flu often cause symptoms such as fever, fatigue, body aches, sore throat, shortness of breath and vomiting or diarrhea; the cold and seasonal allergies normally would not cause a fever. As the course of the illness progresses latter symptoms may also help to distinguish what you may have. COVID-19 can usually be identified by the intense dry cough and possible loss of taste and smell without a runny or stuffy nose.

Ruling out COVID-19 can be as easy as getting tested from your own home. COVID-19 home test kits are now available. You can apply and submit a request to have a test kit delivered to your home for free through the US Postal Service. For more information on how to place and order COVID-19 home test kits you can go to <https://faq.usps.com/s/article/At-Home-COVID-19-Test-Kits>

Below is a chart, provided from the Mayo Clinic, listing each illness along with their common symptoms to help you understand and navigate this season:

*Symptoms	Seasonal Allergies	Cold	Flu	COVID-19
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Usually	Usually
Cough	Sometimes	Usually	Usually	Usually (dry)
Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Usually	Usually
New loss of taste/smell	Sometimes (with a stuffy nose)	Sometimes (with a stuffy nose)	Sometimes (with a stuffy nose)	Usually (without a stuffy nose)
Runny/stuffy nose	Usually	Usually	Usually	Usually
Sneezing	Usually	Sometimes		
Itchy nose, mouth, eyes	Usually			
Fever		Sometimes	Usually	Usually (not always)
Body aches		Sometimes	Usually	Usually
Shortness of Breath/ difficulty breathing			Sometimes	Usually
Sore throat			Usually	Usually
Nausea/Vomit			Sometimes	Sometimes
Diarrhea			Sometimes	Sometimes

Stocking Shelves and Keeping Your Back Safe

In a number of school departments and facilities, one common activity employees may perform is the stocking of shelves. From book shelves to warehousing shelves, along with retrieving items off storage shelves, is how most workers will spend their time. This sort of repetitive motion comes with a number of risks. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has released several reports indicating that workers in warehousing are at the highest risk of musculoskeletal disorders. A third of all workplace injuries are related to muscle issues stemming from improper posture, lifting, etc. One way to help prevent these types of injuries is to restructure how shelves are being stocked.



Safety Tips for Stocking Shelves

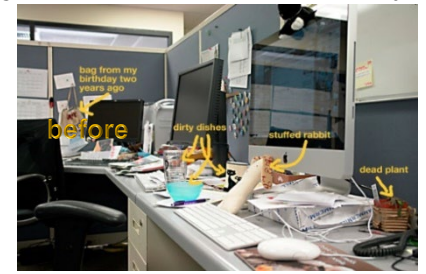
- Frequently used items should be easily located in accessible areas. Any popular or commonly-needed items should be between a worker's knees and shoulders to reduce strain when lifting. Ideally, employees should be positioned in relation to their tasks in such a way that any activity (such as lifting, pulling, pushing, etc.) is performed within knee and shoulder height. If any objects are to be accessed at a high level, employees should use a stepladder. Be aware that loose items stored above can drop during handling.
- Make use of equipment such as carts, dollies and similar mechanisms when handling heavy or oddly-shaped items.
- Perform regular safety checks to make sure all your equipment is operating properly and is safe and functional to prevent accident or injury. Carts that are poorly-maintained, for instance, require greater force to maneuver.
- Redesign your floor plan as needed to provide extra room to work. Keep the floor free of obstructions and make sure there's ample space between different shelves to ensure everyone has room to stock and replace items.
- **Brace shelving units.** Place file cabinets or shelving units over 4 feet tall in low occupancy areas. Book cases taller than 3' high should be placed back-to-back and fastened together. Shelving units 6' tall should be braced to the floor and wall. Shelves 5'tall must be anchored when adjacent to an exit route. Eliminate overhead storage whenever possible. Storage should not exceed 12" from ceiling or 18" if there is a sprinkler. Reserve the bottom shelf or under shelf storage heavier items that will be moved with a hand truck or dolly.

Integrated Pest Management: Spring Cleaning

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a regulated program aimed at controlling pest but minimizing the use of chemicals and pesticides. It is an environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. You can download your District's IPM plan from the School District's website. How do IPM programs work?

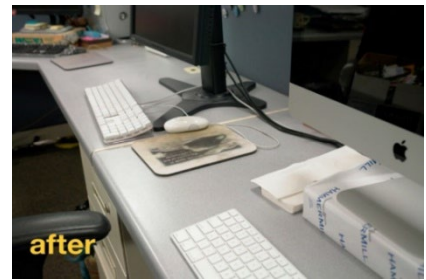
IPM is not a single pest control method but, rather, a series of pest management evaluations, decisions and controls. **Employees can help too!** One easy way all employees

can is by cleaning up and staying organized! Did you know that pests, like roaches and bugs, like to hide in your storage boxes or even in the loose stacks of paper that have been sitting, untouched for months, on your desk? Cleaning is one prevention method that truly makes a big



difference is resolving pest issues and preventing pest problems from happening. If you notice your work area has any signs of pests, such as droppings they leave behind, take these few steps and do so immediately:

- Remove all piles of paper, decorative pieces, including plants, etc.
- Remove all food and do not bring in any food into the space until the pest issue has been resolved. Instead find an alternative place to eat and store food such as in the employee break room.
- Report the pest issue to the school office or the IPM coordinator.



Heat Injury and Illness Prevention: First Heat of the Season

It is predicted that California should be prepared for more record-breaking heat temperatures as we transition into the spring and summer this year. When you're working in the heat, safety comes first. With the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool, you have vital safety information available whenever and wherever you need it - right on your mobile phone. Get the OSHA NIOSH Heat Safety Tool. Check the app store or <https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app>

