

Does your child have seasonal allergies or a cold?

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Expert describes how parents can tell the difference.

(HealthDay) -- It can be difficult during the spring months for parents to determine whether their children have a cold or seasonal allergies, but an expert outlines how to tell the difference.

"Runny, stuffy or itchy noses; sneezing; coughing; fatigue; and headaches can all be symptoms of both allergies and colds, but when parents pay close attention to minor details they will be able to tell the difference," Dr. Michelle Lierl, a pediatric allergist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, said in a hospital news release.

"Children who have spring or fall allergies have much more itching of their noses; they often have fits of sneezing and usually rub their noses in an upward motion," she explained. "They also complain about an itchy,

scratchy throat or itchy eyes, whereas with a cold, they don't."

When people have allergies, their nasal discharge is usually clear and has the consistency of watery mucus, while those with colds typically have yellowish mucus discharge, Lierl said.

She recommended that children with seasonal allergy symptoms be tested for [environmental allergens](#) -- such as [pollen](#) -- that are present during seasons when they have symptoms, but not tested for food allergies or allergens present during seasons when children don't have symptoms.

If your child has [seasonal allergies](#), Lierl suggested many things you can do to control symptoms:

- Keep windows closed during periods of high pollen and fungal spore levels, and change air conditioner filters every month.
- Change children's clothing when they come inside from outdoors. Wash clothing to rid them of all [outdoor allergens](#).
- After being outside, children should wash their face, hands and hair, and parents should use a nonprescription saline solution to rinse children's eyes and nose.
- Limit outdoor activity in the morning, when [pollen counts](#) are higher. When traveling, keep vehicle windows closed to keep pollen and other allergens out.
- Make sure [children](#) take their allergy medicine daily during pollen season.

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [seasonal allergies in children](#).

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