

## Is it a Cold or a Winter Allergy?

If you find yourself struggling with the sniffles and chronic congestion this time of year, it might seem like the inevitable start of cold and flu season. But just as likely, if it's an ongoing issue, the culprit could be allergies.

For allergy sufferers, winter can mean miserable days and nights due to indoor sensitivities to dust mites, molds, and other household and environmental triggers. <Doctor Name> says that fall and winter allergies can “sneak up and begin having an impact before you realize you’re allergic.”

Wintertime is especially troublesome for people who suffer from indoor and environmental allergies. “This is when we tend to close up and seal our homes tightly against the cold temperatures,” says <Dr. Name>. While this may help the fuel budget, it can contribute to many problems associated with indoor allergy symptoms. When we turn on the furnace, we blast airborne dust, fabric fiber, bacteria, food material, and animal dander throughout our homes. Add to that wood-burning fireplaces, holiday greenery, and other typical winter comforts, and you’ll soon see allergies exacerbated even further. “We tend to see three common allergens affecting allergy sufferers: house dust mites, indoor molds, and animal dander. These get worse in winter when ventilation is inadequate,” adds <Dr. Name>.

How do you tell the difference between a cold and sinusitis? Cold symptoms typically build then slowly disappear. Symptoms can include nasal congestion, runny nose, headache, achiness and fatigue. Sinusitis can exhibit similar symptoms that tend to linger longer and is often accompanied by pressure or pain around the face and eyes, headache in the forehead area, thick, yellow nasal discharge, post-nasal drip and congestion.

Research from Mayo Clinic cites that mold allergies are at the root of as much as 80% of sinusitis cases. The allergy can cause inflammation of the sinus channel, which blocks sinus drainage and leads to infection. Without addressing the underlying allergic cause of the problem, sinus issues can recur indefinitely.

“Many people who have recurrent sinus problems can benefit from allergy drops to treat the underlying allergy,” notes <Dr>. “For those with chronic issues, it could prevent the need for sinus surgery when allergy is the underlying cause.”