Symptoms of colds, flu, pneumonia and meningitis can be similar. Mistaking one for the other could mean an extended illness and serious complications. How do you know what you have?

Colds are inconvenient but usually not serious and can be treated at home. Symptoms may last 4-14 days and include:
- Runny nose and/or sneezing
- Coughing
- Sore throat
- Head and body aches
- Low fever (less than 101° F)
- Congestion of the ears, nose, throat and head

Flu typically hits in Michigan December-March. Acute symptoms last 3-4 days, and cough may linger for 3 weeks. Gastrointestinal symptoms are rare. Complications are uncommon in young, otherwise healthy adults. Symptoms include:
- Rapid onset of symptoms
- High fever (greater than 101° F)
- Severe body aches and/or headache
- Dry cough
- Extreme fatigue
- Chills

Pneumonia can be serious and even fatal. See a clinician if you experience symptoms:
- High fever (greater than 101° F)
- Cough that produces thick, brown or bloody phlegm
- Chills
- Chest pain while breathing

Meningitis requires immediate medical care. Early diagnosis and treatment is critical. Meningitis can be caused by viruses or bacteria, and bacterial meningitis can be fatal if untreated. If you experience meningitis symptoms, consult your clinician or go to an emergency room immediately. Symptoms include:
- High fever (greater than 101° F)
- Severe, sudden headache accompanied by any of the following:
  - Mental changes (e.g. agitation or confusion)
  - Neck or back stiffness
  - Rash on your body (commonly the armpits, groin, ankles)