

Information Sheet #4

Top Tips for living with Congenital Anosmia

Top Tips for living with a smell/taste disorder as provided by members of Fifth Sense



Find someone you trust to ask them about smells, particularly when it comes to personal hygiene. It's very hard when you don't know what smells are, so get someone to tell you - discreetly. But so long as you're using deodorant and toothpaste, you should smell as fresh as everyone else!

Gudrun - Gateshead, UK



I am very aware of expiration dates on my food. I was food poisoned once in my early 20s because I had no idea that Kraft grated Parmesan cheese expires... It was 3 months old when I used it.

Sharon - New Jersey, USA



In college in the late 80s, when people could still smoke in bars, I'd have roommates smell a sweater after I'd been in a bar for the night. Sweaters are more difficult to wash, so I didn't want to have to wash it if it didn't smell.

Anon



Don't feel ashamed if your family doesn't believe you. Some people are too inward looking. Be compassionate to others who have other disabilities and difficulties.

Anon - Tacoma Washington, USA



Have a Gas Detector in your home (not just a Carbon Monoxide detector) especially if you have gas appliances. Have friends handy to smell potentially spoiled foods for you (or when in doubt, throw it out!)

Suzanne - New Hudson, MI



Most of my strategies are preventive and proactive - I always set reminders and timers to do certain things like when I'm cooking, to clean my cat's litter box, etc. These are things that a person with a sense of smell would KNOW to do, but without an alert, I would easily forget.

Anon - Minneapolis



As we congenital anosmia sufferers have never smelled anything then we cannot miss it. Be grateful for the rest of our senses, one of which is often heightened, and for our mental and physical good health. Of all the senses to be born without, smell is the least life-impacting. There is no cure so get on with life.

Anon - Birmingham, UK



Recognize that people are going to forget. Be forgiving when they do.

Allison - Indiana, USA



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I always have working smoke detectors. I used to avoid gas stoves but now I have one and love it - I just try to be very careful.

Elizabeth - Houston, TX



Take extra precautions than one normally would. Buy extra items (e.g., natural gas detector) that can detect things others can sometimes smell. Ideally... find a partner who is willing to smell your clothes (and sometimes body!) for you. If anything, make sure to be open with your partner about how this disability impacts you.

Alex - Baltimore, USA



Teach safety skills early - watch cooking/listen for smoke alarm/check Use By dates/ask others to smell or taste to help you check.

Anon



1. Set timers when cooking to remind yourself to turn off the stove. 2. Ask friends and family to tell you if you stink. Remind them that you won't know if you do and that it won't hurt your feelings. 3. Tell people. It's a fun fact. You can educate while telling funny anosmia stories. 4. Remind yourself that just because you can't smell it doesn't mean you don't smell! 5. Develop a 6th sense. Notice how your brain compensates for your lack of smell.

Dia - Niwot, Colorado



Recognise that it ranks very low on the list of life's possible pitfalls. Occasionally it is a mild inconvenience. No drama.

Anon



Marry someone with a sense of smell!

Monique - Miami, Florida