

CHRONIC RHINOSINUSITIS (CRS) WITH/WITHOUT NASAL POLYPS AND ALLERGIES



Our Learning Zone suite of Information Sheets were created by a collaborative panel of experts: medical, scientific and people who live with smell and taste disorders. We would like to thank them all for giving and sharing their time, experience and knowledge.

Fifth Sense is the charity for people affected by smell and taste disorders. Based in the UK, we are the first charity providing direct support, information and a signpost to potential diagnosis and treatment to people affected by these conditions. We play a leading role in educating

people about the importance of the senses of smell and taste to our lives. Through this we can promote awareness of the consequences of smell and taste disorders, demonstrate the need for greater availability of medical services and advocate for further research into treatment for these conditions.

Fifth Sense is a membership organisation. Membership is free and open to anyone affected by or with an interest in smell or taste-related disorders, including family members, carers and health or scientific professionals.

Who should read this?

People who have lost their sense of smell because of Chronic Rhinosinusitis (CRS) with or without nasal polyps and those who are experiencing changes to their ability to smell and taste fully caused by allergies.

What is CRS?

Chronic rhinosinusitis or CRS, occurs when the spaces inside the nose and head (sinuses) are swollen and inflamed for three months or longer, despite treatment. This common condition interferes with the way mucus normally drains and causes nasal congestion. The reasons why these problems occur is not entirely clear and is the subject of ongoing research. Current theories include a response to inhaled particles (allergy), sheets of bacteria stuck together (biofilms) and toxic chemicals produced by bacteria (superantigens); in a small number of cases the nose over-reacts to the presence of fungal spores which all of us breathe in from the air. It could be brought on by an infection, by growths in the sinuses (nasal polyps) or swelling of the lining of your sinuses. It is a relatively common condition that has a typical prevalence of about 11% of the population.

What are the symptoms?

Nasal inflammation, thick, discoloured discharge from the nose, drainage down the back of the throat (postnasal drainage), nasal obstruction or congestion, causing difficulty breathing through your nose, pain, tenderness and swelling around your eyes, cheeks, nose or forehead, reduced sense of smell and taste, ear pain, aching in your upper jaw and teeth, cough or throat clearing, sore throat, bad breath and fatigue.

Common causes of chronic rhinosinusitis include:	Common consequences/exacerbating factors of CRS include:
Respiratory tract infections – These are mostly commonly colds and can inflame and thicken your sinus membranes and block mucus drainage. They can be viral, bacterial or fungal.	<p>Nasal polyps - These tissue growths can block the nasal passages or sinuses.</p> <p>Deviated nasal septum - A crooked septum — the wall between the nostrils — may restrict or block sinus passages, making the symptoms of sinusitis worse.</p> <p>Allergies such as hay fever - Inflammation that occurs with allergies can block your sinuses.</p>

Are there treatments available and how do I get them?	Is there anything I can do at home to help myself?
<p>Intranasal treatments can be effective but need to be used correctly and regularly:</p> <p>First line treatment options for chronic rhinosinusitis are intranasal corticosteroids and intranasal saline rinsing, usually in combination.</p> <p>Persistent use of over-the-counter topical nasal decongestants should be avoided because it causes rebound nasal congestion, known as rhinitis medicamentosa.</p> <p>Sinus surgery is not usually a curative treatment, but is aimed at unblocking sinus drainage pathways and spaces to allow topical nasal medication to be more effective</p>	<p>Nasal rinsing: www.fifthsense.org.uk/sinus-rinsing</p> <p>Avoid upper respiratory infections: Minimize contact with people who have colds. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially before meals.</p> <p>Manage your allergies: Work with your doctor to keep symptoms under control. Avoid exposure to things you're allergic to whenever possible.</p> <p>Avoid cigarette smoke and polluted air: Tobacco smoke and air contaminants can irritate and inflame your lungs and nasal passages.</p>

What can a specialist doctor do?

It is usual practice to treat your condition medically as a first measure. The gold standard for treatment includes nasal steroid sprays/drops and salty water rinses. In select cases steroid tablets and long-term antibiotics (at least 3 months) may have a role to play. For those patients who don't get sufficient respite from their symptoms, sinus surgery may be available following appropriate investigations.

There are a number of consultants who specialise in smell and taste disorders that can be viewed at: www.fifthsense.org.uk/clinics. You can ask your GP to refer you to a specialist and they may perform any of the following diagnostic tests:

- **Looking into your nose (endoscopy):** A thin, flexible tube with a fibre-optic light inserted through your nose allows your doctor to see the inside of your nose.
- **Imaging tests:** Images taken using special x-rays (CT scan) can show details of your sinuses and nasal area. These might show signs of sinusitis if the endoscopy doesn't and will be needed if sinus surgery is planned.
- **An allergy test:** If your doctor suspects that allergies might be making your chronic sinusitis worse, he or she might recommend an allergy skin test or a blood test. A skin test is safe and quick and can help detect what allergen is responsible for your nasal flare-ups.
- **Samples from your nasal and sinus discharge (cultures):** Cultures are generally unnecessary for diagnosing chronic sinusitis. However, when the condition fails to respond to treatment or is worsening, your doctor may swab inside your nose to collect samples that might help determine the cause, such as bacteria or fungi

What relevant research is happening in this area?

The Fifth Sense James Lind Alliance Smell and Taste Disorders Priority Setting Partnership is currently considering the main questions that people affected by smell and taste disorders want research to address. More details can be found at www.fifthsense.org.uk/smell-taste-ppsp/. For information about research projects and to access published research, please check our research resources on our website www.fifthsense.org.uk/research.

The Macro Programme is a study into the effectiveness of treatments for chronic rhinosinusitis (CRS). For more information visit www.fifthsense.org.uk/macro www.themacroprogramme.org.uk.

How can my family and friends support me?

We know that it can be challenging for other people to understand the impact that a smell or taste disorder can have. Try talking to your partner, family and friends about how your condition affects you, so they can try to understand and support you. Ask someone to be a 'designated nose' - check the milk to see if it has gone off, tell you how you smell and help keep you safe from gas and smoke risks.

HELPFUL HINTS

TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

- Keep making and eating interesting foods - texture, temperatures, heat (chilli/mustard/pepper/spice) can all bring interest to a meal. Focus on the basic tastes (sweet (sugar), sour (lemon juice), acid (vinegar), salt (salt), umami (savoury).
- Use mindfulness and your other senses to tune into the characteristics of each meal and drink.
- Focus on the sensations you can perceive, not those that are missing:
 - Roasted vegetable curry with poppadoms, cool yoghurt and mint mango chutney, lime pickle.
 - Lamb tagine with chickpeas, dates, toasted flaked almonds, pomegranate seeds, and cool yoghurt and mint.
- Nutrition: Moderate the use of salt/sugar as it's easy to overdo to compensate for lack of aroma. A balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables is more important than ever and can support the healing process.
- Get a timer. If you can no longer rely on detecting when a food is cooked by smell, consider using a timer to prevent any culinary disasters.
- Follow trusted recipes carefully if you can no longer rely on flavour to correct estimations.

TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Be vigilant regarding smoke and natural gas. You may want to install and regularly check smoke/heat detectors. You could invest in a natural gas detector or change appliances from gas to electric.
- Establish or maintain a regular personal hygiene routine including washing, deodorising and paying attention to oral hygiene. Ask a friend/family member to be your designated nose and give you honest feedback.
- Be mindful of the vapours produced by cleaning products in the home. When cleaning ensure you have ventilation to stop the fumes from building up and keep on top of cleaning and washing of clothes and bedding (human and pets).
- Be cautious around chemicals and pollution. When using cleaning products or chemicals, ensure you ventilate the room(s) you are using them in to avoid the build-up of fumes. Always ensure you store products in their original container but if you decant anything ensure you clearly label what is contained - this applies to alcohol, chemicals, cleaning chemicals, petrol etc).
- If you rely on your sense of smell to perform your job, you should discuss the matter with your manager or supervisor, who with your permission, can contact us for further advice if required.

TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR WELLBEING

- Use the SmellAbility© toolkit diary to track any changes and/or progress of your ability to smell and celebrate any improvements.
- Use your memory to imagine the flavour and aroma of foods as you eat them. This can be powerful and may improve your enjoyment and eating experiences.
- Engage in interests that don't depend on a sense of smell – e.g., exercise - get as fit as possible to help your body recover from Covid-19, learn a language, do an online course, learn to play an instrument, take up crafting etc.
- Reach out if you need help. There are lots of support services available (as detailed in the table on page 1).
- Indulge in some self-care. Take time out to relax, look after yourself, meditate, treat yourself to beauty treatments, spend some time outdoors appreciating nature.

TIPS FOR MANAGING PAROSMIA

SEE INFORMATION SHEET #7– COPING WITH PAROSMIA

- Sometimes, total smell loss can be replaced by a smell disorder called Parosmia - a distortion of the sense of smell which is often an unpleasant odour that replaces something pleasant. Whilst this can be very distressing it can be a good sign and an indication that the sense of smell is trying to recover. This is often temporary, although its longevity is widely variable, and it can affect certain aromas and not others.
- Work out your triggers and avoid them – sometimes certain foods/drinks can trigger a distortion such as coffee, dark chocolate, wine, egg, onion, roasted/fried foods, citrus. To combat this, try different foods and aromas to find those that don't cause distortion and enjoy them (e.g. white chocolate, cheese, fruits, miso, salads, vegetables, pasta, sushi, gin...). Some of these can soften the distortion of some foods/flavours/aromas.
- Mask foods affected with a strong flavour that doesn't cause a distortion (cinnamon, chilli oil, peppercorn sauce). Try using cinnamon or herbal toothpaste as an alternative, if mint is an issue.
- Seek out non-scented toiletries and fragrances to avoid any scent becoming distorted.