

# TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR



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.

## Why do people lose or have no sense of smell?

There are a number of reasons for having no sense of smell or in acquiring a smell disorder. The most common causes are:

- An infection or virus, such as a cold or Covid-19, flu or sinusitis etc.
- Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Allergies, such as hay fever.
- Chronic Rhinosinusitis (CRS). Symptoms of this can include persistent inflammation of the sinus area including nasal polyps, which are benign growths in the lining of your nose that sometimes appear.
- Age-related degeneration. Many people experience some changes to their ability to smell and/or taste as they get older. Just as our hearing and sight can decline, so can our sense of smell and taste.

- Some treatments for cancer.
- Exposure to dangerous chemicals such as pesticides or solvents.
- Abuse of drugs inhaled through the nose.
- Smoking.
- Pollution and poor air quality.
- Some neurodegenerative conditions such as Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, or brain tumours.
- Idiopathic loss where the cause is unknown.
- Congenital anosmia is where someone is born without ever being able to smell. This can be because they have no olfactory bulb or there is damage to the olfactory bulb/system.

If you are experiencing smell/taste loss or changes that persist, like any physical change to your health, it is important to seek medical advice. Changes to our ability to smell and taste can sometimes be an early indicator of other conditions and it is important to get it checked. Similarly, if your inability to smell/taste is causing you to feel anxious, have low mood or feel depressed or frustrated, then talking with your doctor can help.

This education sheet can help you to plan what to say to your doctor, how to explain how you are feeling, describe what you want help with and what is worrying you. Please make your own notes before, during and after your conversations with your clinicians.

Our other information sheets about the different causes might help you to make your notes - [www.fifthsense.org.uk/information-sheets](http://www.fifthsense.org.uk/information-sheets)

<b>Date and place of your appointment:</b>	<b>Who your appointment is with:</b>
<b>How to describe your condition:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
The approximate date you noticed changes to your sense of smell/taste, what might have caused it, or if you have no memory of ever being able to smell/taste.	
Describe the physical effect associated with your smell/taste disorder e.g any irritation, swelling, discomfort, pain etc.	
Describe how your emotional wellbeing is affected e.g feeling anxious, depressed, frustrated, low in mood, socially excluded etc.	
List any other aspects of your condition:	

How to describe your concerns:	Notes:
Changes to your eating habits/weight:	
Effects on your relationships/social engagement:	
Impact on your job/studying/tasks that you undertake:	
List any other concerns you have:	

Questions you might want to ask:	Notes:
What do you think is causing my smell/taste loss/changes?	
Is there any treatment I can have and what is this?	
What affects might the treatment have?	
Why isn't there any treatment for me?	
Can I be referred to a specialist in smell and taste disorders? A list of specialist clinics can be found by <b>clicking here</b>	
What tests might a specialist run?	
List any other questions you might ask:	