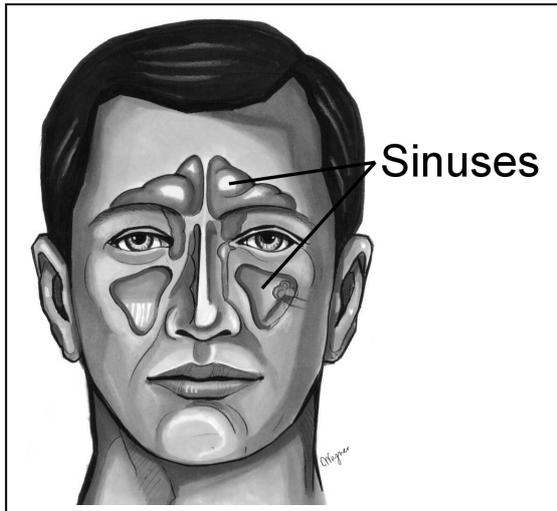


Loss of smell (anosmia)



Loss of the sense of smell (anosmia) is common as people age. The sense of smell represents 80% of what people perceive as taste. Most people without a sense of smell will be able to tell whether food is salty or sweet but lose their ability to discern subtle “flavors”.

Sudden loss of the sense of smell may be caused by viral infections, trauma (head injury), medications (particularly some blood pressure and cholesterol medications), dietary deficiencies (B12, folate, zinc) but many have no

identifiable cause. Gradual loss of smell may be associated with nasal or sinus diseases (allergies, polyps, sinus infections), medical conditions (Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s disease), metabolic conditions (diabetes, underactive thyroid) or brain tumors (rare).

WHAT TESTS ARE NECESSARY?

Dr Iseli will perform a sinus endoscopy to look inside your nose, sinuses, and your throat. This can rule out many common causes such as polyps, tumors or reasons for repeat infections. Dr Iseli may recommend blood tests (B12, folate, zinc, thyroid function) and occasionally a CT or MRI scan to exclude any serious cause.

WILL I RECOVER MY SENSE OF SMELL?

Occasionally, a cause is found and can be treated. More often, no cause is found. For the group where no cause is found, approximately 50% will recover a significant amount of their sense of smell. However, only 10-20% will fully recover their previous sense of smell.

LIVING WITH A LOSS OF SMELL.

It is very important that you observe some safety issues with your reduced sense of smell. These include:

- Having a working smoke detector.
- Have a working gas leak detector if you have gas appliances.
- Have someone check your food/ milk to check if it is spoilt before consumption and regularly check the recommended use-by date.

Often loss of sense of smell has a significant impact on enjoyment of food and quality of life. It is important not to overeat to try to compensate. Try stronger flavors and spicier foods that you may not have enjoyed prior to losing your sense of smell. Tell your friends and family that you have difficulty with poor sense of smell and ask that they tell you if your body odors are perceptible.

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