

FACT SHEET



Physical Changes After Brain Injury Sensory - Taste & Smell

QUICK FACTS

- Common after all severities of injuries
- In minor injuries, recovery will occur usually within a few months following the injury
- Health, safety, and hygiene issues need to be addressed because individuals may be at an increased risk for ingesting toxins, or developing unsanitary habits
- A loss in the ability to taste is usually due to a lost sense of smell

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Difficulties in smell may lead to:

- **Anosmia** - a total loss of sense of smell
- **Hyposmia** - a partial loss of sense of smell
- **Hyperosmia** - enhanced sensitivity to odours
- **Phantosmia/parosmia** - 'false' smells - experiencing smells that aren't there
- **Dystocia** - distortion in odour perception

Disorders of taste include:

- **Dysgeusia** - distortion or decrease in the sense of taste
- **Ageusia** - complete loss of sense of taste
- **Parageusia** - experiencing a bad taste in the mouth

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

Possible causes:

- Injury to the nose or damage to the nerves located in the nose and mouth
- Damage to specific areas of the brain associated with smell and taste
- Some medications can affect the sense of taste

Possible complications from loss of taste:

- Depression due to an emotional connection with food that they can no longer taste or smell
- Loss of enjoyment of food
- Loss of appetite and interest
- Difficulty eating dry foods
- Lack of balance in the diet
- Avoidance to eating
- Avoidance of specific foods that may taste unpleasant (e.g. meat)
- Weight loss

Possible complications from loss of smell:

- Increased health and safety risk due to inability to smell food that has gone bad, natural gas, smoke, etc.
- Loss of taste and enjoyment of food
- Decreased salivation for eating because cannot smell food

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical doctor. Consult a health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.

FACT SHEET CONTINUED.



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WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Encourage the person to talk with others who are experiencing the same difficulties
- Access counseling to address emotional difficulties connected with a loss of senses
- Support the maintenance of a healthy diet by:
 - Making meals varied and interesting
 - Avoid using too much salt or adding excess sugar to coffee/tea
 - Ensure they are drinking an appropriate amount as liquid can help remove unpleasant tastes
- Taste and smell are very important senses to help our bodies warn us against health and safety issues. Use the following strategies to keep yourself and the individual safe:
 - Ensure smoke alarms are working
 - Encourage them to use an alarm to remind them of food cooking Service gas appliances regularly
 - Practice proper food safety by paying attention to "use by" dates and clearing out the fridge and cupboards regularly
 - Ensure all cleaning products and chemicals are in their original containers and labeled
 - Keep bleach and cleaning products away from food and drink
 - Keep a regular schedule of bathing and clothing/bed linen washing
 - Assign a close friend or family member to assist in managing and identifying these concerns

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