

50% of COVID sufferers report damaged sense of smell 5 months after recovery

More than 50% of healthcare workers infected with SARS-CoV-2 report that their sense of smell has not returned to normal an average of 5 months post infection, new research shows.

The findings illustrate that olfactory problems are common not only during the acute COVID phase but also “in the long run” and that these problems should be “taken into consideration” when following up these patients, study investigator Johannes Frasnelli, MD, professor, Department of Anatomy, University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres, Quebec, Canada, told Medscape Medical News.

Loss of sense of smell can affect quality of life because it affects eating and drinking, and may even be dangerous, said Frasnelli. “If your sense of smell is impaired, you may unknowingly eat spoiled food, or you may not smell smoke or gas in your home,” he said.

In addition, Frasnelli noted that an impaired sense of smell is associated with higher rates of depression.

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Research shows that about 60% of patients with COVID lose their sense of smell to some degree during the acute phase of the disease. “But we wanted to go further and look at the longer-term effects of loss of smell and taste,” said Frasnelli.

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