

## Find coffee bitter? Taste-linked gene identified that could be protecting millions of people from getting COVID

People's perception of taste (coffee tasting very bitter, slightly bitter or not bitter at all, for example) has been known for over a decade to be [associated with their immune response](#) to [respiratory infections](#) and sinus infections — stronger perception of bitterness reflects stronger immunity. But past studies of this connection have focused on bacterial infections and inflammation, not viruses. [Ear nose and throat surgeon Henry] Barham wondered whether taste receptors could be connected to the coronavirus.

...

From July 1 through Sept. 30, 2020, they followed 1,935 patients and health-care workers who had been exposed to the coronavirus but had neither a previous nor current infection... About half were classified as tasters, a quarter as nontasters, and a quarter as supertasters [having the T2R38 gene].

...

Nontasters, the researchers found in [\[a recently published study\]](#), were far more likely to contract the disease and for their symptoms to last longer: an average of 23.5 days — compared to five days for supertasters and 13.5 days for tasters.

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Barham says he hopes that what he and his team have discovered about the supertaster gene will help scientists to not only determine treatment for covid-19 but also advance their understanding of the flu and other viruses.

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