

I've lost my sense of smell: Is it COVID-19?

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(HealthDay)—While loss of smell is a symptom of COVID-19, don't panic—there are a variety of other possible causes, one expert says.

"It can be due to nasal or sinus inflammation, or other [viral infections](#) distinct from COVID-19," explained Dr. Bobby Tajudeen, director of rhinology, [sinus surgery](#) and [skull base surgery](#) at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

"And it can even occur as a result of some neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer's or dementia, or vitamin deficiencies. Rarely tumors can present with [smell loss](#)," Tajudeen added.

Loss of smell is most often the result of inflammation caused by sinusitis, polyps in the nose and even allergies, and the [loss of smell](#) can be progressive.

Treating the inflammatory condition can restore your sense of smell, he explained in a medical center news release.

But a sudden loss of smell can indicate a viral condition.

"Usually when people have a cold, they have congestion and a [runny nose](#), and they can't breathe through their nose," Tajudeen said. "At the base level that usually causes a temporary reduction in smell. However, once the congestion resolves, in patients with viral-induced smell loss, their smell does not recover."

With COVID-19, loss of smell is among one of the first signs of infection.

"[It] usually occurs for those who have a mild form of the virus," Tajudeen said. "Patients with smell loss are normally at home recovering and not admitted into the hospital or on a ventilator."

With other viruses, recovery of smell could take months and even years. For COVID-19 patients, the sense of smell usually returns in about four

weeks. COVID-19 patients whose loss of smell lasts longer than that should see a specialist, Tajudeen said.

It's a good idea to see an ear, nose and throat specialist anytime you have a loss of smell, he added.

More information: The U.S. National Institutes of Health has more on [loss of smell](#).

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