

CENTER FOR SMELL AND TASTE

NYOG / Northwell Health

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Loss of Smell and Taste

Smell, taste, and flavor each play a different role in how we experience food and the world around us. Taste comes from the tongue and detects sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and savory. Smell comes from specialized nerve fibers located high in the nasal cavity. Flavor is the combination of both—most of what people think of as taste is actually the contribution of smell.

The smell fibers sit deep in the upper part of the nose in an area called the olfactory cleft. These nerve endings detect odors and send signals to the brain, allowing you to identify scents and experience the full flavor of foods.

Loss or reduction of smell and taste can occur for several reasons. The most common cause is nasal congestion from a cold, sinus infection, or allergies. This type of loss is usually temporary. More persistent loss is typically due to nerve damage, which can occur after viral infections (including COVID-19), head trauma, or aging. Until recently, no consistently effective treatments had been identified for this type of nerve-related loss.

PRP (Platelet Rich Plasma) offers a promising new option for patients with persistent loss of smell. Because PRP uses your own concentrated platelets to support healing, early double blind studies show that it can help improve smell function in cases of nerve injury. After PRP treatment, we also recommend smell therapy, a structured program of repeated exposure to specific scents to help retrain the olfactory system.