

# ANOSMIA

(Gandhras)



ANOSMIA comes from the Greek; an [no] -osmia [smell]. Of the five senses, smell ranks fourth in importance for humans, although it is much more pronounced in other animals. Taste, considered the fifth sense, is mostly the smell of food in the mouth. The sense of smell originates from the first cranial nerves (the olfactory nerves). A small area on the mucous membrane that lines the nose (the olfactory epithelium) contains specialized nerve cells called smell receptors. These receptors have hair like projections (cilia) that detect odours. Airborne molecules entering the nasal passage stimulate the cilia, triggering a nerve impulse in nearby nerve fibers. The fibers extend upward through the bone that forms the roof of the nasal cavity (cribriform plate) and connect to enlargements of nerve cells (olfactory bulbs) that form the cranial nerves of smell (olfactory nerves). The impulse travels through the olfactory bulbs, along the olfactory nerves, to the brain. The brain interprets the impulse as a distinct odour. Also the area of the brain where memories of odours are stored, the middle part of the temporal lobe is stimulated. The memories enable a person to distinguish and identify many different odours experienced over a lifetime. A reduced ability to smell (hyposmia) and loss of smell (anosmia) are the most common disorders of smell and taste. Because distinguishing one flavor from another is based largely on smell, people often first notice that their ability to smell is reduced when their food seems tasteless.

*Ayurveda says that everything in this universe is made up of 5 elements so is our body.*

From **Akasha** (Ether) came the *Shrotendriya* (organ of hearing)

From **Vayu** (Air) came the *Tvagindriya* (organ of touch)

From **Agni** (Fire) came the *Chakshrindriya* (organ of vision)

From **Jala** (Water) came the *Jihvendriya* (organ of taste) and

From **Prithvi** (Earth) came the *Ghranendriya* (organ of smell).



It must be borne in mind that Indriya does not mean the physical organ, these are the sense perception medias. Thus it carries connotations of dominance or control. For example, the nose is an organ. In it is situated a subtle Indriya called Nasa (nose). If this Indriya is defective, the person will not be able to smell although his nostrils are normal. Just as Prana is vital for the physical body, Indriyas are vital for the organs of perception. It should therefore be understood that the subtle elements give rise to the Indriyas and not the organs."

The Ayurvedic texts define the source of all disease and suffering as pragyaparadh, or "the mistake of the intellect." This occurs when individuals (or even single cells) "forget" their connection with the wholeness of life and believe themselves to be isolated entities. Creating, and then eating, genetically engineered foods expose us to pragyaparadh. We are all threads in the fabric of creation, say ancient Ayurvedic texts. To believe ourselves as a weaver, capable of successfully manipulating nature's intelligence, is a symptom of pragyaparadh. It is our ignorance. The genetic program of a living organism is vastly more powerful and more complex than limited human intelligence. To keep our nasal strength good we all must be very careful for the smells. Be it in the form of perfumes, aromas, spices, cooking, fumes, or smoke.

## CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS

Anosmia occurs from either an obstruction in the nose or nerve damage. An obstruction prevents odours from reaching the delicate nerve fibers of the nose. The most common cause of anosmia is nasal occlusion caused by rhinitis (inflammation of the nasal membranes). If no air gets to the olfactory nerves, smell will not happen. In turn, rhinitis and nasal polyps (growths on nasal membranes) are caused by irritants. Anosmia can also follow a head injury or an acute or chronic attack of allergies. Many medications may change or decrease the ability to detect odours. The sense of smell is often lost with disorders like tumours, or surgery of the brain. It may also be due to zinc deficiency. Tobacco smoking is the most concentrated form of pollution that most people will ever be exposed to. It impairs the ability to identify odors. Hormonal disturbances or dental problems are also a cause. Anosmia can occur as a part of other loss of function of the brain. With the loss of sense of smell there can also be a loss of taste. Distortion of function-foods or odours that normally are pleasant may taste or smell odd or distorted, perhaps with an unpleasant smell. Victims may not be able to distinguish flavours.

## MANAGEMENT

### Treatment depends on the cause of a smell or taste disorder

Nasal steams with essential oils offer relief of the blockage and tonification of the membranes. Karpooradi oil, Eucalyptus oil can be used in nasal steam.

\* *Jala Neti* – Blockages can sometimes be resolved through naso-specific therapy – a way of realigning the nasal cavities. Neti can be called a "nasal douche". Take warm water, which is slightly above the body temperature. Add salt to this water at the rate of half a teaspoon per glass of 300 ml. This is equal to the salinity of the mucous secretions in the respiratory system. Saturated salt water has high osmotic pressure. It is a law in physics that in Osmosis, fluid flows from a region of higher concentration to a region of lower concentration through a semi-permeable membrane. In inflammatory conditions of nasal cavity including sinuses, there is congestion and oedema of nasal mucosa. Naturally during "Jalaneti" fluid from mucosal cells comes out which relieves the congestion and oedema very fast. This helps in better functioning of mucosal



cells and also opens up closed openings of the sinuses in nasal cavity. In our nose there are nerve endings of olfactory nerve, which are responsible for our sense of smell. During "Jalaneti" these nerve endings are stimulated by saline that give us very pleasant sensations. These pleasant sensations have a very beneficial effect on centre of emotions located in limbic systems of brain. Thus Neti improves sensitivity of the olfactory nerves, helping to restore lost sense of smell, and thereby benefits the relationship with taste and the digestive processes.

\* *Nasya* – It is a process by which drug is administered through the nostrils. Nasyakarma enhance the activity of sense organs and prevent the diseases of head (urdhwanga). The nose is the gateway to the brain and to consciousness. Prana or vital energy enters the body through breath taken in through the nose. Nasal administration of medication helps to correct the disorders of prana affecting the higher cerebral, sensory and motor functions. Nasya is indicated for dryness of the nose, sinus congestion, hoarseness, migraine headache, neurodegenerative conditions, convulsions and certain eye and ear problems. Oils that can be used for Nasa includes Anu tail, Shadbindu tail, Ksheerbala tail.



\* *Shiroabhyanga* – The head massage serves to open the srotas in the head, neck and shoulder regions. This treatment nourishes the five senses by focusing on the 'marma points', many of which are located around the head. These points, when gently massaged have a hugely calming and balancing effect throughout the body and nervous system.

\* *Herbs and formulations* – Tulsi, Ginger, Garlic, Cloves, Cinnamon, Licorice, Vyoshadi vati, Agastya haritaki, Lavangadi churna, Panchamrit ras, Nardiya Laxmivilas Ras are useful herbs and combinations in this disorder.

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