

# The Sense of Smell in U.S. Adults Over Age 40

## The sense of smell is important.



Smell interacts with taste to help you enjoy the flavor of food.



Smell helps you avoid spoiled food and toxic chemicals.



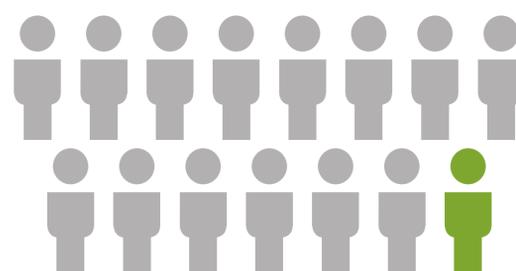
Smell alerts you to danger, such as fire and gas leaks.

## Not everyone has a good sense of smell.



Smell tests show that **about 1 out of 8** people has some **smell loss**.

**About 1 out of 30** people has **very little** or **no** sense of smell.

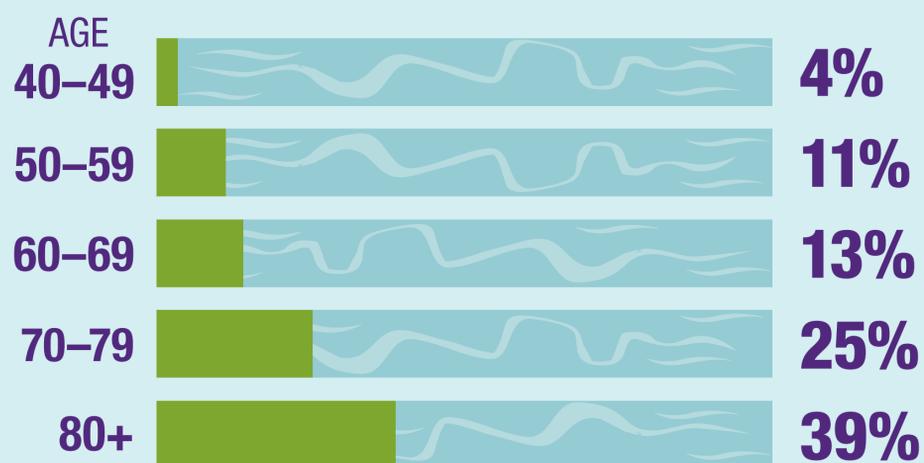


**About 1 out of 15** people reports **smelling phantom odors** that aren't really there.

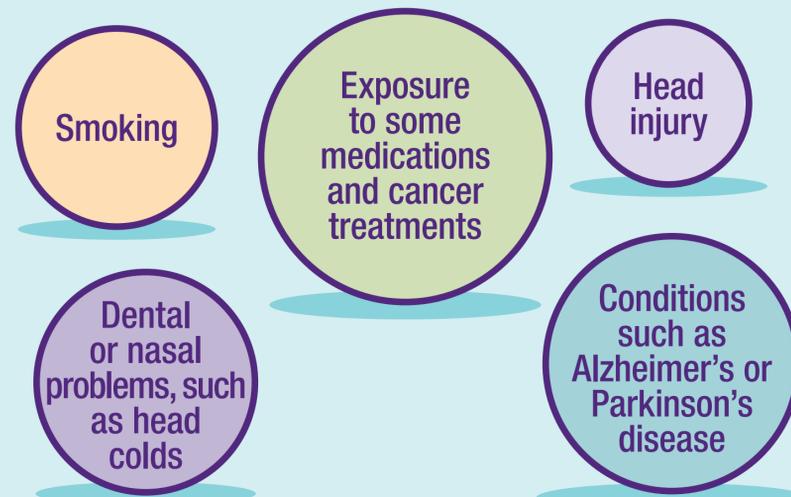


## Some people are more likely to have problems with their sense of smell.

Older people are more likely to have smell loss.



People with a history of:



Having problems with your sense of smell?  
Talk to your doctor, or learn more at [www.nidcd.nih.gov](https://www.nidcd.nih.gov).



<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov>

<https://twitter.com/nidcd>

Sources:

Smell Disorders: <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/smell-disorders>  
U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Analyses reported in *Chemical Senses* in 2016, *JAMA Otolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery* in 2018, and *Reviews in Endocrine and Metabolic Disorders* in 2016.