



**American Academy of Otolaryngology—  
Head and Neck Surgery Foundation**

*Working for the Best Ear, Nose, and Throat Care*

## **Doctor, I've lost my ability to Smell & Taste**

*Insight into these important senses*

*Are they serious?*

Smell and taste problems can have a big impact on our lives. Because these senses contribute substantially to our enjoyment of life, and our desire to eat and be social, smell and taste disorders can be serious. When they are impaired, life loses some zest, we eat poorly, socialize less and, as a result, feel worse. Many older people experience this problem.

Smell and taste also warn us about dangers, such as fire, poisonous fumes, and spoiled food. Certain jobs require that these senses be accurate — chefs and firemen rely on taste and smell. One study estimates that more than 200,000 people visit a doctor with smell and taste disorders every year but, many more cases go unreported.

Loss of the sense of smell may be a sign of sinus disease, growths in the nasal passages or, in rare circumstances, brain tumors.