

Frequently Asked Questions

*I can smell some of the odors but not others.
Is this normal?*

It is perfectly normal to detect certain smells more than others. Our ability to detect the odors varies depending on our age, culture and past exposure to these odors or odors within the same family. By being exposed to an odor, our body improves its capacity to detect this smell. It is for this reason that 4 scents from different families are used in the therapy.

Some of the 4 smells proposed are unbearable for me or I am not able to find them in store. Can I change the scents used in olfactory therapy?

Studies in the literature on olfactory therapy have mainly used the 4 scents suggested in this pamphlet. On the other hand, they can be substituted by odors from the same family (e.g. citronella replaced by orange). The important thing is to practice smelling the 4 families of smells. The only family that is less inclined for substitutions is the family of resinous/fresh scents, in which there are fewer options (examples include eucalyptus and menthol).

« Stop and smell the roses. »

Walter Hagen



Olfactory therapy

How can you improve your sense of smell with olfactory therapy?



Laboratory of Prof Rona Graham
Research Centre on Aging
University of Sherbrooke
Quebec, Canada

What is olfactory therapy?

Olfactory therapy is a simple and non-invasive method to stimulate the brain and the olfactory nerves using repeated stimulation of the sense of smell. It is often used to help with the loss of or a decrease in the sense of smell.

We can lose the sense of smell for several reasons. Below is a non-exhaustive list of situations in which olfactory problems can occur and for which olfactory therapy could be beneficial:

- Viral infection (Ex : Cold, COVID-19)
- Head injury
- Prolonged exposure to chemical products
- Normal aging
- Mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer disease, Huntington and/or Parkinson disease

The brain can be compared to a forest filled with trails connecting neurons together. Each action or thought follows a path. The more a trail is used, the clearer it becomes and easier to walk on. By repeatedly exposing the brain to scents, olfactory therapy reinforces the "trails" between the neurons responsible for detecting the smell, those that encode it in memory, and those that link it to past memories in our brains. Over time, this could allow us to recognize and detect odors more easily and accurately.

Material needed to do olfactory therapy at home

Material needed to do olfactory

- 4 air tight 2 ounce amber straight sided glass jars
- Cotton balls
- Essential oils : Four distinct families of essential oils are used in olfactory therapy:
 - Citrus scents (citronella, lemon, orange)
 - Floral scents (rose)
 - Resinous/fresh scents (eucalyptus, menthol)
 - Spicy scents (clove, cinnamon)



Preparation for olfactory therapy

Step 1: Insert one cotton balls into each jar.

Step 2: Identify each jar with the name of one of the 4 scents that will be used in the olfactory therapy.

Step 3: Take one of the jars,

open it and put 20 drops of one of the essential oils onto the cotton balls inside the jar. Close the jar.

Step 4: Redo this for each jar with their respective

odors.

Odors should be replenished every month, depending on the strength of the odor remaining in the jar.

How to do olfactory therapy?

- You must smell the 4 scents twice a day over a period of at least 4 months.
1. In the morning: Find a quiet place.
 2. Open and bring one of the jars close to your nose.
 3. Smell the odor for 15 to 20 seconds.
 4. Focus: try to imagine the smell, even if you don't perceive it. If memories related to the smell come to you spontaneously, focus on them. Otherwise, try to associate the smell with memories and elements of your surroundings.
 5. Pause for 10 seconds.
 6. Repeat for each smell.
 7. Repeat steps 1 to 6 in the evening.

Important precaution

As the odor will be smelled every day, it is important that it is a quality essential oil. Choose recognized brands, products made with 100% essential oils, avoid products identified as fragrances since they are not designed for olfactory therapy.

Frequently Asked Questions

I can't smell the scents. Will the olfactory therapy still work?

It's normal not to smell the scents perfectly at first or even not to smell them at all. Consistency is key! Continue to do the therapy anyway. However, it could be suggested that you increase the number of drops to put in the containers or refill them more often to adapt the therapy to your situation.