



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **FRESH CHRISTMAS TREES, MULLED WINE, HOT MINCE PIES AND SCENTED CANDLES... JUST SOME OF THE SMELLS THAT MAKE CHRISTMAS SUCH A DIFFICULT TIME FOR ANOSMIA SUFFERERS**

Our memories and experience of Christmas are closely linked to the smells around us, whether it's the smell of mulled wine as we walk through a Christmas market, or the smell of pine needles as we decorate the Christmas tree.

However, for people suffering with smell loss (anosmia), Christmas can be a very isolating and difficult time of year.

Smell loss can affect people of all ages and for many different reasons, such as after an upper respiratory illness, a head injury, or sinus disease. It's estimated that up to 5% of the UK population (over 3 million people) could be suffering from;

- anosmia - a complete lack of smell
- parosmia - a distortion of smells
- phantosmia - phantom smells
- hyposmia - reduced smell

Smell loss is an invisible disability that can have a profound effect on people's lives. Without smell, appreciation of food is diminished and quality of life can suffer. Sufferers can feel anxious about the dangers of being unable to smell gas or smoke, isolated due to a loss of intimacy with close family members, and feel diminished social ties. Smell loss also affects a person's ability to experience flavour, which can alter their relationship with food and lead to weight cycling.

Research to support those affected remains limited but is growing. AbScent is a UK charity that provides support.

Chrissi Kelly, Founder of AbScent, lost her sense of smell in 2012 after a sinus infection. She says; *"Christmas can be a particularly hard time of year for anosmia sufferers as they can feel disconnected from the enjoyment their friends and family are experiencing. So many of our memories of Christmas are connected with smell, whether it's the smell of roast potatoes in the oven or the alcohol burning away on*

*top of the Christmas pudding. Losing our sense of smell shuts off a vital part of how we can participate in and appreciate Christmas.”*

Hazel Harrison from Soberton in Hampshire lost her sense of smell 5 years ago. She says; *“I miss the smell of food cooking, especially the turkey as this is such a unique smell and I really only have turkey at Christmas. I also miss the smell of the cold frosty mornings when you go out for a walk - especially fir tree type smells. Then there is all the perfume as gifts, and whenever I have to choose something for my daughters, I have to ask someone else to choose or just get something that I remember I liked. It makes choosing presents for people very difficult as often gifts are associated with smell or taste.”*

People suffering from smell loss can visit [www.abscent.org](http://www.abscent.org) for support and advice. AbScent has also launched the Sense of Smell Project to improve understanding of anosmia among sufferers and the medical community <https://abscent.org/about-us/sense-smell-project>. It's the first 'crowd-sourced' research project into the condition.

[Smell training](#) has been shown to amplify recovery where there is damage to the olfactory nerve, by stimulating this nerve and encouraging it to regenerate. The original protocol uses the essential oils of rose, lemon, clove and eucalyptus which are smelled twice a day for a minimum of four months. The Sense of Smell Project is being launched alongside a Smell Training app, which is the first of its kind, and will help users to learn the technique, serve as a daily aid to training, and monitor their progress.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors:**

- [AbScent](#) is a UK registered charity No. 1183468 started in 2018 to help people who are experiencing the distressing effects of smell loss.
- The Sense of Smell Project will be overseen by an international expert on smell disorders, [Prof. Thomas Hummel](#) of the University of Dresden in Germany and data analyst in olfactory studies [Robert Pellegrino](#), of the University of Tennessee.
- For more information on the latest available research into smell loss visit: <https://abscent.org/learn-us/latest-research>
- AbScent's vision is a world where smell loss is recognised by the general population as a challenging condition, where patients are fully supported by the medical community and their care circles, and where healing strategies are explored, funded and made available to the world-wide population.
- The effects of smell loss can be complex and therefore support is necessary from several areas to suit the biopsychosocial needs of the community.
- [Smell training](#) is a supportive technique for people who have suffered smell loss and has been demonstrated in over a dozen scientific studies to be of benefit for people who have lost their sense of smell after a virus or injury.

- [Smell training](#) is not a cure, but a way of amplifying natural recovery. Every time it is done it stimulates the olfactory nerves and this encourages the nerve to regenerate. It can be likened to physiotherapy for the nose.
- AbScent consists of Founder Chrissi Kelly, Trustees Miriam Block and ENT Simon Gane of the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital in London, and an advisory board detailed on the website.

[www.abscent.org](http://www.abscent.org)