Q & A

Clipping the Olfactory Nerve

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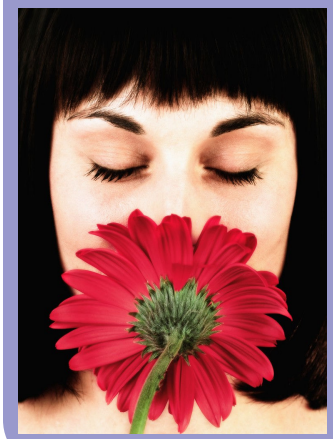

Q: I have multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) and someone suggested that I could get better by having my olfactory nerve clipped so I can't smell anything. Will that really make it so that I don't react to chemicals any longer?

A: Of course not! The person who made this suggestion clearly has not understood what MCS is.

Clipping the olfactory nerve as a way to treat MCS is equivalent to telling a diabetic to have their taste buds cut off so they can't taste sugar in the mistaken believe that eating sugar won't increase a person's blood sugar unless it can be tasted.

MCS is not a dislike of smells or sensitivity to smells. It's the toxic effects of chemicals in fragrances, cleaners, and other products, not the smell, that causes the symptoms of MCS.

Consider that a person with MCS is also poisoned by toxic substances without a smell, such as natural gases and "unscented" products which have chemicals added to mask scents and odors.

Being unable to smell will not stop a person from inhaling a toxic substance. It will only stop the ability to smell the substance. The toxic effects on health would still persist.

Worse, not being able to smell would render a person with MCS unable to avoid toxic substances.

The sense of smells serves as an alert to people with MCS. Once alerted, protective measures can be taken until it is determined whether the substance in question is toxic or inert.

If the sense of smell is removed, one will be unable to avoid such exposures and risks constant toxic effects of substances without being able to identify and remove the cause.

Smelling provides the ability to be alerted to potential problems before they arise. Therefore, it is of extreme value to people with MCS.

It is often difficult for others to understand why someone with MCS has a toxic reaction when they do not.

It may help to explain to these well meaning people that chemicals can damage the liver, brain, and central nervous system causing inflammation and biological changes in the body that lead to a toxic buildup and reduced ability to eliminate toxics. Once this occurs, MCS develops.

Some people are genetically more susceptible to developing MCS. Others are not susceptible at all, but may suffer damage leading to MCS as a result of acute or chronic chemical exposure.