If You Can't Smell Peppermint and Coconut or maybe others, You May Have COVID

WONDERING IF YOU HAVE CORONAVIRUS? YOUR FIRST STOP FOR SCREENING IS IN YOUR KITCHEN.

As one of the stranger symptoms of COVID, losing your sense of smell or taste can be a dead giveaway that you've contracted the virus. In fact, a recent article in The New York Times reported that up to 87 percent of patients experience this surprising symptom. And, according to the Vanderbilt University Medical Center, in roughly 25 percent of people diagnosed with coronavirus, it's the first and only sign that something is amiss. Knowing that this symptom—medically referred to as anosmia—can serve as a key indicator for diagnosis, one study set out to find particular smells could serve as bellwethers for a COVID-positive test. Because the study originated in India, the researchers chose five scents that were often available in Indian households. They found that people who had difficulty smelling peppermint and coconut oil were most likely to later test positive for coronavirus. Read
on for more details, and for additional information on this symptom, check out There's an 80 Percent Chance You Have COVID If You Have This Symptom.

In total, the research team screened 25 odorants, ultimately choosing five to use for the experiment that participants were most familiar with: coconut oil, cardamom, fennel, peppermint, and garlic. They then graded the scents based on potency and familiarity, and developed a prototype testing kit, which people could easily recreate at home.

Ultimately, they found olfactory deficits in roughly 50 percent of otherwise asymptomatic COVID-positive patients. Of the five scents, peppermint and coconut oil were most frequently misidentified or undetectable to those with coronavirus: 36.7 percent and 22.4 percent of patients misidentified peppermint and coconut oil respectively. Similarly, the greatest number of patients were unable to smell those two scents entirely: 24.5 percent of patients could not smell peppermint and 20.4 percent could not smell the coconut oil.

There are a few reasons that people can lose their olfactory senses due to COVID. First, people with upper respiratory conditions often experience "congestion, drainage, and other nasal symptoms," which can block access to the smell nerve. But more likely, according to the Vanderbilt University Medical Center, "the virus causes an inflammatory reaction inside the nose that can lead to a loss of the olfactory, or smell, neurons."

Either way, smell tests like these can offer a window into a person's COVID diagnosis. As the researchers noted in their study, which has yet to be peer reviewed, at-home tests could have a huge impact on global efforts to screen for coronavirus. "Given the non-availability/expense nature of testing kits, this test may enable us to perform rapid and wider testing," the researchers wrote. "In addition to this, the test has a potential to be one of the preliminary scanning methods along with infrared thermometry at the entry points of hospitals, government and private offices, shops and other places of public dealing in order to have a safe cordon." In other words, it's not a fool-proof solution, but it may give people a hint that they should go in for further testing.
So, if you're wondering whether you've got coronavirus, head into your kitchen and take a whiff of those two ingredients. They may just tip you off to a silent COVID infection.

Don't have those two ingredients on hand? Read on for other options, and for more on coronavirus, find out The "Wacky" Symptom That Means You Have COVID, Not the Flu.

Coffee

There's nothing like coffee to give your senses a boost, and if you can't smell the sweet aroma of your morning cup of joe, that could be a sign to see your doctor.

Proteus Duxbury, former chief technology officer for the Colorado health insurance exchange, who battled COVID in March, told Kaiser Health News it helped him ID his bout with the virus. "I didn't have cough, headache, fever or shortness of breath," he said. "But everything tasted like cardboard. The first thing I did every morning was put my head in the coffee jar and take a real deep breath. Nothing." And for the complete list of symptoms to familiarize yourself with, here are These Are the 51 Most Common COVID Symptoms You Could Have.
Professor Carl Philpott from Fifth Sense, a U.K. based charity supporting people affected by smell and taste disorders, says garlic is another great indicator to use. "Garlic, coffee, and coconut are additional scents you can use," he told COVID Symptom Study. "However, this is not an exhaustive list. ... You should have a number of smells already in your cupboard at home that you can use, so there's no need to purchase anything special for these tests. All you need to make sure is that, the smell that is safe to hold reasonably close to your nose— make sure you avoid any potential irritants like air freshener, bleach, or other strong smells that can cause a tingling sensation or harm to the nasal passage." And if you want to breath more easily to keep COVID at bay, This Simple Breathing Exercise Could Help You Fight Coronavirus.
If you're in the shower and notice your shampoo isn't waking you up like it normally does, it may be reason to see your MD. Philpott suggests sniffing a fragranced shampoo like coconut to see how your sense of smell is doing. "Just hold the item close—but not touching—your nose and inhale. Simple!" he says. And for more strange signs of the virus, here's The New Coronavirus Symptom That's Appearing Weeks After You Get Sick.

Citrus
Looking for another option? "Grated zest of an orange, lemon, or lime in a bowl," Philpott recommends. And if you want to be sure you're staying safe, here are 24 Things You're Doing Every Day That Put You at COVID Risk.

Essential oils

Lastly, if you're a fan of essential oils, you can choose one to smell daily as your barometer. "Spray some of the liquid on a fragrance strip or a tissue and hold underneath your nose and inhale," Philpott suggests.