

Smell Loss and Kidney Disease

Our sense of smell is not only used to appreciate new blooms in Spring and the aroma of a great meal but is essential when we taste our food as well. Recently, researchers have found those with advanced kidney disease may experience a loss of smell. While the cause is unknown, researchers are looking for ways to improve the sense of smell in kidney disease patients in order to decrease rates of malnutrition.

When your sense of smell is reduced, your ability to taste food is also reduced. This could lead to food aversion and eating less. As a kidney disease patient, eating less will quickly lead to malnourishment which is one of the leading causes of morbidity among those with kidney disease.

A new study in the [Journal of the American Society of Nephrology](#) presents interesting statistics on smell loss and a possible treatment. The study included 36 patients with CKD, 100 with kidney failure and 25 with normal kidney function. In smell tests, the average odor identification score was lower in patients with CKD or kidney failure than in the controls. Team lead, Dr. Teodor Paunescu observed that most kidney disease patients do not perceive a problem in their sense of smell and the severity of the smell loss increased with the severity of their kidney disease.

After determining the rate of smell loss researchers noticed it correlated with poor lab results in several markers of nutrition such as cholesterol and albumin levels. These findings lead the team to conduct a proof-of-concept 6-week trial of an asthma drug, which was found to improve the ability to smell in 5 of 7 patients. [This proof-of-concept trial shows the need for a larger study](#) to validate these findings and offer a treatment for a condition most kidney disease patients don't even notice.

© 2017 The Dialysis Patients Citizens (DPC) Education Center. All rights reserved. Unauthorized use prohibited. The information contained in this website is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment, and consultation with your doctor or healthcare professional is strongly recommended. The DPC Education Center is a section 501(c)(3) non-profit charity (37-1698796). Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by the law.