

'LOSS OF SMELL IN SOME CASES'

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From a mother unable to smell her baby's nappy to a lawmaker who suddenly could not taste food, some COVID-19 patients have described a loss of olfactory senses — and experts say this might be a new way to detect the virus.

Ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialists in Britain, the U.S. and France have noted a growing number of patients in recent weeks with anosmia — the abrupt loss of smell — and have said this could be a sign of COVID-19 in people who otherwise appear well.

The World Health Organisation lists the most common signs of COVID-19 as fever, tiredness and dry cough.

In Britain, ENT doctors have urged health authorities to advise people with a sudden loss of smell or taste to self-isolate even if they have no other symptoms. "Anything we can do to delay transmission is absolutely vital," Claire Hopkins, the president of the British Rhinological Society, told AFP.

Ms. Hopkins, who published an open letter on the issue on Friday with ENT U.K. chief Nirmal Kumar, said she was not surprised when she heard initial reports from Iran and France of COVID-19 patients reporting a loss of smell.

Around 40% of cases of sudden loss of smell in adults are caused by post-viral anosmia, she said.

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