

LONG COVID - BUSINESSES URGED TO RETHINK FOOD PREPARATION AND COFFEE FREE SPACES BY SMELL LOSS CHARITY ABSCENT

Submitted by: Green Row Communications

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WAKE UP, BUT DON'T SMELL THE COFFEE!

BUSINESSES URGED TO RETHINK FOOD PREPARATION AND COFFEE FREE SPACES

As workers prepare to return to shared offices, the UK's leading smell loss charity, AbScent, warns that employers must take loss of sense of smell and taste seriously and plan for its impact on the workplace.

More than 3.85 million people in the UK are currently affected by smell loss, which manifests primarily in two forms: Anosmia is the inability to smell or taste to varying degrees of severity; and parosmia which distorts sense of smell so that innocuous items may smell foul e.g. coffee smells like sewage, and people may smell things that are not there e.g. cigarettes.

Chrissi Kelly, Founder, AbScent, said; "We've all worked in offices where we smell people heating lunches in the microwave, or strong vats of wafting coffee. For the millions of people with parosmia this is going to be unbearable and nauseating. Hot drinks, hot food, and snacks prepared in a microwave may well smell like rotting meat, urine, or faeces to someone with parosmia. This is a distortion of olfactory perception and can be unbearable to the person experiencing it. When foods are hot or heating, the perception of the odour is greater than at room temperature. Thus tea kitchens and food preparation areas can be great sources of distress for parosmics. . For those experiencing smell problems, there can be disastrous repercussions for mental health, happiness, and relationships."

But she adds; "Businesses can help their employees by preparing to support people with anosmia and parosmia by taking simple and straightforward steps." Here is a guide to the 5 things that businesses can do to support people in an office environment.

1. Coffee Free Spaces

Coffee is the most reported problem that parosmics experience with people smelling coffee as rotten meat, sulphur or faeces. Hot coffee is the worst offender and the smell is worse than the taste. Some people can tolerate a cold brew coffee from the fridge. We advise creating dedicated 'Coffee Free Spaces' where no hot coffee is brewed or consumed.

2. Move microwaves into kitchens / closed areas

Nothing could be worse for a parosmic than an environment where people are openly heating food. Whether it is leftovers or ready meals the wafting smells of an office microwave will be horrific for someone suffering with parosmia. People report a generic smell associated with the microwave which often triggers nausea. It is also frequently reported to smell like urine. Even something we consider delicious like heating popcorn will have the same awful smell and nausea triggers. We recommend removing microwaves from shared workspaces and placing them in enclosed rooms. People with parosmia should ideally be seated far away from, or if possible on another floor from food production.

3. Open Dialogue and communication

You should create an open dialogue with your employees and let them know that you understand the seriousness of smell and taste loss. Persisting problems can be associated with Long Covid, or can

continue on their own when a person is otherwise completely fit and healthy. Acknowledge that person's experience and support them by creating a food free environment for them to work in. Include your HR team and make it known that you support people with smell loss.

4. Identifying and supporting jobs that require smell

Many jobs require a specific use of the sense of smell and in these cases employers should be aware of any safety issues which might prevent a person carrying out their duties. Jobs that require smell in day-to-day function include; Plumber, carer, emergency response, fire service, Chefs, food service, wine industry and many others – some of which may not be obvious.

5. Smell Training and support

Some people may not have sought help or even recognise / articulate their problems. AbScent has a huge number of free resources, recommended by the NHS, to help people deal with everyday life. Businesses are encouraged to share these with their workforces. Some people's sense of smell will return on its own, and some people can be helped with Smell Training. Smell Training is proven to improve sense of smell and is clinically developed to exercise the olfactory process. AbScent's smell training kits are available in three varieties, and can be exported to the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. 100% of proceeds directly support the work of the charity.

Smell loss includes a broad range of conditions including anosmia (total loss of smell), hyposmia (partial loss of smell), parosmia (distortion of smell) , and phantosmia (phantom smells). AbScent has an unrivalled resource of trusted information delivered by a distinguished advisory board and working with the latest scientific and clinical evidence. AbScent advocates to increase understanding and raise awareness of the conditions and their impacts supporting research into smell conditions.

For hints and tips about how smell training please visit <https://abscent.org/learn-us/how-smell-train>.

For more information, case studies and hi resolution images please contact Helen Trevorow or Vicky Hague on 0794 000 9138 or email helen@greenrow.co.uk

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About AbScent

AbScent is the charity caring about people touched by smell loss. AbScent is an unrivalled resource of trusted information delivered by a distinguished advisory board and working with the latest scientific and clinical evidence. Visit <https://abscent.org/> or follow on:

<https://www.instagram.com/abScentuk>

<https://twitter.com/abscentuk>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AbScentParosmia>

About Chrissi Kelly

AbScent was established by Chrissi Kelly who experienced first-hand the huge impact of smell loss and the lack of understanding in medicine and the general community. Following a bad sinus infection in 2012 Chrissi woke up, went into the bathroom, brushed her teeth, and realised she could not smell anything. Panic-stricken, her condition led her to a perfumery course, which in turn led to her development of smell training to help people recover from smell loss. Smell training re-trains the brain to smell by stimulating the olfactory nerve to regenerate.