Olfactory Impairment
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The primary vocational handicap associated with olfactory impairment involves work related to cooking and food preparation.

Olfactory impairments are primarily caused by damage to the first cranial nerve. The most common cause of such damage is trauma from falls or blows to the back of the head. In instances where permanent nerve damage results in a loss of sense of smell (anosmia), there is usually a concomitant loss of sense of taste.

The vocational handicaps directly related to the loss of sense of smell or taste are usually relatively minimal. The primary vocational handicap involves inability to learn the theory and techniques of food preparation. This is not to suggest that an individual with a total loss of sense of smell or taste would be unable to participate in food preparation. However, vocational options in cooking and related work – the primary worker trait group affected – would be substantially limited.

Additional vocational handicaps may result from psychological complications secondary to first cranial nerve damage and olfactory sense impairment.

Individuals affected by olfactory nerve impairments or the loss of sense of smell and taste who are able to return to their pre-accident work or similar work generally require no more than three to six weeks of rehabilitation counseling and guidance services. Those who change to alternative work and who need minimal assistance in placement should require no more than six to twelve weeks of intervention.

Those who may have already been in the cooking or related work field, and who feel that a major change in career direction is necessary, may require up to 12 months of counselor intervention. The client may choose a lengthier program of training depending on the circumstances and his or her interests, aptitudes, and intellectual capacities. In such instances, rehabilitation counseling involvement may be limited during the course of training, with contact re-established at the time of post-training placement. Selective placement assistance is typically not necessary.