



A mouthful of salt for Covid-19 research

A key symptom for the coronavirus is a sudden loss of taste and smell. Researchers at Human Nutrition and Health have been working on developing a home test for quantifying that loss.

The research started with an online questionnaire that was filled in nearly 50,000 times. The results raised more questions: how long do people suffer from these symptoms? And how reliable are the results? Boesveldt: 'People give their own estimates of how much they can taste and smell, but we know from research that self-reporting

is not always very reliable. So we have developed a home test that is more objective.' This was not easy. The test had to be doable anywhere

'We had to look for products that everyone has in the house, such as shampoo and salt'

in the world, and by people themselves. 'We had to look for products that are available everywhere, and that everyone has at home.' For example, shampoo, salt, herbs and coffee. People have to sniff and taste the products and assess the intensity of the smell or taste. If they do the test several times, it is possible to see how the sense of smell and taste improve after a case of Covid-19.

The symptoms are different to those of a common cold or the flu. These often cause a blocked nose, which is why you can't smell much. 'In the

case of the coronavirus, we are seeing that the loss of smell has nothing to do with a blocked nose. That suggests that a different mechanism is at work. We think it has something to do with the ACE2 receptors, which the virus latches onto, and which are found in the nose.' cJ

Read about Resource editor Coretta Jongeling's experience with this test on resouce-online.nl