

Differences in Sensitivity to Odors between Migraineurs of Different Genders

A group from the Universidade Metropolitana de Santos recently completed a study assessing the role of odors in triggering or worsening migraine headaches in men. Sensitivity to odors, known as osmophobia, is a well established symptom found in those suffering from migraines, and is known to both bring on and exacerbate migraine headaches. Currently, the importance of environmental factors such as sound, light, and odor in triggering or worsening migraines has been infrequently reported in studies, so data on this topic is limited. The researchers from the Universidade Metropolitana de Santos chose to focus exclusively on odors as the triggering or worsening factor for migraines in their study. These researchers also chose to conduct their study on an entirely male group so that the differences in sensitivity to odors between men and women migraineurs could be determined.

The study sought to determine whether odors were a more or less important factor in triggering or worsening migraines for males as compared to females. Previous studies on mixed gender groups have suggested that odors either play an equally important role for male and female migraineurs or that women are slightly more sensitive to odor than men. This study, on the other hand, concluded that men with migraines are more sensitive to odors than women. This conclusion was based on the all male group listing odor as a more prevalent triggering and worsening factor for migraines than the mixed gender groups previously had. The group has acknowledged that there may be difficulties comparing the results for an all male group to those for a mixed gender group, but assert that the all male study has produced potentially interesting data. They hope that the findings regarding the sensitivity of male migraineurs to odors can be used in tailoring a gender specific educational guide for patients experiencing migraines.