Chiropractic Newsletter
Your Amazing Body

Do Skunks Celebrate Valentine's Day?

Answer: Of course they do! They are very scent-imental! Get it!? 'Scent' as in smell and sentimental as in feelings of tenderness! Scent-imental! Funny right!?! Ok maybe it stinks as a joke (pun intended), but it's a great way to introduce the part of your amazing body that we are going to explore this month… your amazing ability to smell!

If breathing was the only thing you did with your nose it would be amazing enough, but it's so much more than that! Inside your nose is a special layer of cells which contains over 10 million receptors that can identify about 10,000 different smells! Tiny odor molecules pass through your nose to the receptors which then send messages to your brain. We sniff things simply to get more of those molecules up into the top of the nose where the receptors are located.

It is estimated that dogs can smell 40 times better than people can. This is partly because dogs have nearly 300 million olfactory receptors compared to our 10 million. Still, think of all the things you can smell. You can smell the difference in seasons: flowers, grass, leaves, and snow. You can smell pleasant smells like perfume, chocolate, and bread baking and not so pleasant smells like wet dogs, rotting garbage, and skunks. Think of all the different kinds of food: peppers, onions, oranges, peanut butter, hamburgers and cookies (just to name a few)! Try to name five different things that you would like to smell right now.

When the receptors are activated by some scent molecules, they send messages along the olfactory nerve to the olfactory bulb which is located just above your nasal cavity in the front of your brain.

Your brain interprets those messages and identifies the smells so you can learn about your environment and act accordingly. For example, maybe you come home from school and as you come into the house you can smell dinner cooking! That may mean you go wash up and find your place at the kitchen table. Or maybe you come home and you smell something burning. Your behavior will be quite different; it may even mean you call the fire department!

Your sense of smell also plays a role in your sense of taste. Have you ever noticed that food doesn't taste the same when your nose is stuffy from a cold?

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That's because the scent molecules can't make their way through your nose as easily when it is stuffy. You can try to imitate this effect by eating something while pinching your nose shut. You will quickly find whatever it is you're eating doesn't taste the same.

Of course in order for your body to work to its fullest potential, you have to maintain a healthy spine and a clear nerve system. Your family's chiropractor can help you with that.

by Judy Nutz Campanale
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