

To photic sneeze reflex

by [Jacob Stratman](#) in the [December 30, 2020](#) issue

Each time we are called out of the car to face the sun, after having spent time in the shade, we respond with a sound offering—six or seven sneezes, our chorus of cacophony on a bright day. It is, I've been told, a genetic confusion of signals—these misfires making an announcement all their own. These sneezes are mistakes, I've read. There are no impurities in the nose to release and reject. The brain gets it all wrong. Maybe a change in light intensity or over-sympathetic body parts? Perhaps a product of the Fall—the trigeminal nerve a hot mess—too crowded, too many signals to manage. When you see us, though, a man and his two sons get out of a car, leave a building, or walk outside to check the mail, we'll begin sneezing at the sun, and you'll wish you were made of such mistakes—made of such tangled synapses, these automatic responses to light with bowed heads of obedience, sounds of our unplanned, unprepared praise, thanks, and adoration.