

ORAL COMFORT: A NEW CONCEPT TO SINK YOUR TEETH INTO



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In the mouth, the combined action of the teeth, tongue, and saliva processes food into a food bolus ready to be swallowed. However, aging often goes along with changes in the oral sphere, such as tooth loss, decreased saliva secretion, reduced masticatory muscle forces, gum inflammation, etc. These alterations can have significant effects on the elderly's ability to eat food and the act of eating may become uncomfortable, laborious or even painful.

In the framework of the AlimaSSenS project funded by the French National Research Agency (ANR), a survey was carried out by CSGA's researchers among people aged over 65 to identify the characteristics of oral comfort. The researches asked

18 elderly people to describe pleasant or unpleasant sensations they experienced during food intake. A questionnaire was built on the results and 40 other elderly people evaluate five different meat products (beefsteak, ground beef, chicken nuggets, etc.) using this questionnaire.

Results have shown that oral comfort is a complex concept which takes into account the ability to form a food bolus, pain sensations experienced while eating, but also food texture and taste. To an elderly person, oral comfort mainly depends on easiness to chew, to humidify and to swallow as well as on texture softness. Oral pain sensations that occur when eating decrease oral comfort. Beyond these first dimensions, oral comfort also tends to be lower for dry and little melting textures, as well as for low taste intensity foods.

Thanks to this work, a questionnaire to evaluate oral comfort during food intake was validated. The use of this questionnaire could help to develop food products that would be better tailored to the oral physiology of the elderly.

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To know more

Vandenberghe-Descamps M, Labouré H, Septier C, Feron G & Sulmont-Rossé C (2017). Oral comfort: A new concept to understand elderly people's expectations in terms of food sensory characteristics. *Food Qual. Prefer* doi: 10.1016/j.foodqual.2017.08.009.

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Key words

Elderly; older adult; food; mouth, dentition; chewing; saliva; questionnaire