

# SENIOR & SENS

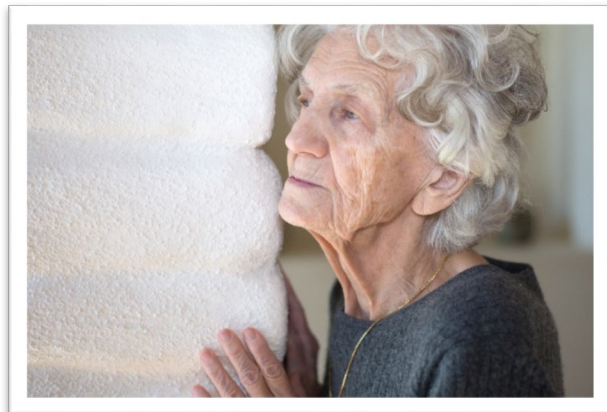
## DIFFUSING SCENTS TO STIMULATE APPETITE IN ALZHEIMER PATIENTS

**Researchers from the CSGA in collaboration with the Hospital from Haute Côte d'Or have demonstrated that exposing elderly people suffering from Alzheimer's disease to food odor may increase appetite and food intake in these patients during the subsequent meal.**

Alzheimer's disease is often associated with feeding difficulties and changes in eating behavior which may cause a decrease in food intake. It is estimated that 30-40% of Alzheimer's patients are malnourished. In French nursing homes, Alzheimer patients may live in special care units ('Unités de Vie Protégées') that meet dementia residents' needs, offering them a safe space adapted to their disabilities and preserved capacities. However, meals are seldom prepared within these units but rather delivered by using meal trays coming from 'central kitchens'. This led to the disappearance of cues that could help patients to foresee mealtime, such as kitchen sounds or food odors.

During an experiment carried out in collaboration with the Hospital from Haute Côte d'Or (special care units of Montbard, Châtillon-sur-Seine and Alise-Sainte-Reine), a food odor was diffused in the dining room 15 minutes before the arrival of the meal tray (olfactory priming). Food intake and behavior were recorded during the subsequent lunch for 32 elderly patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Results showed a significant effect of olfactory priming, with a 25% increase in meat and vegetable consumption and a significant increase of resident's interest toward the meal compared to a control condition without any odor. However, this effect was no longer observed when the priming session was replicated two weeks later with the same priming odor and the same menu.

These results suggest that diffusing food odor before a meal can stimulate appetite and food intake in elderly people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Despite further researches are needed to confirm the long-term effect using different odors, olfactory priming seems to be a relevant tool to prevent and fight against malnutrition in this population.



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### To know more

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<http://www.dijon.inra.fr/Toutes-les-actualites/Des-odeurs-pour-redonner-de-l-appetit-aux-patients-atteints-par-la-maladie-d-Alzheimer>