



Nutrition

Taste and Perception- Simulation Lab

Introduction:

As individuals age, the sensory changes and social isolation often experienced by older adults can impact their dietary habits and safety. Many older adults eat alone at home, relying on food stored in their refrigerators. However, diminished senses, particularly smell, can make it difficult to detect spoiled or out-of-date food, increasing the risk of foodborne illnesses. This simulation aims to highlight the challenges faced by older adults when eating alone and how sensory limitations affect food safety. It will also give people the opportunity to experience the decreased enjoyment of food that older adults often face due to a loss of taste buds.

Materials:

- 1 Tbsp of a variety of food items (some with strong smells, and some with a neutral appearance and smell)
 - Foods such as Soy sauce, maple syrup, garlic and mustard
- 4-5 bowls to put the food items/condiments into
- 1 nose pin or clip you can place on your nose to block the sense of smell.

Procedure:

- 1) Get 4 separate bowls and the food items listed above (Soy sauce, maple syrup, garlic and mustard).
- 2) Make sure you are seated by yourself.
- 3) Place the contents of food into the bowls.
- 4) You can smell these items without any impairments, to note how good your current senses are.
- 5) Get the clip you are using and place that on your nose so your sense of smell is impaired.
- 6) Now smell all these items again, repeating for each food item.

Reflection questions:

What emotions did you experience while eating alone? How do you think social interaction influences an older adult's eating habits and nutrition?

How did the loss of smell in the simulation change your perception of the food you were eating? Did it make you less interested in eating?

Were you more hesitant to eat certain foods when you couldn't smell them properly? How might this lead to unintentional malnutrition or food avoidance in older adults?