



Taste

A Day with Dentures

Nearly 25 percent of older adults have experienced partial or complete loss of teeth and use dentures. Older adults also frequently experience problems with the sense of taste due to oral infections, sinus and upper respiratory tract infections, diabetes, or nutritional deficiencies. Hypogeusia is reduced ability to taste salty, sweet, sour, bitter and savory (3). In the “Day with Dentures” simulation, you will experience hypogeusia with a particular focus on salt perception. You will also experience dysphagia, or difficulty swallowing (1), and what it feels like to eat with dentures. The simulation aims to evoke empathy towards older adults that experience hypogeusia and dysphagia as these age-related disorders impact their everyday lives.

Materials

- 2 dental gauze or cotton balls
- 1 salty crackers, pretzels, or chips
- 1-2 pieces of sour food item such as sour candy, lemon, or lime
- 1 chewy food item such as candy, chewy vitamins, or beef jerky
- 1 soft food item such as banana or bread
- 1 bottle of liquid such as water, milk, or juice
- 1 scarf or headband

Procedure

1. Complete the precursor simulations if you have not already done so.
2. Place the two pieces of dental gauze or cotton balls between your lips and gums on each side of your mouth to simulate what it feels like to wear dentures.
3. Eat the sour food item (e.g., sour candy). Pay attention to sensations in your mouth.
4. Eat the salty food item (e.g., saltine crackers, pretzels, chips). Notice the difference.
5. Eat a piece of the sour candy, followed by the saltine cracker. What you feel?
6. Now, wrap the scarf/headband along with the frame of your face.
7. Eat the chewy food item (e.g., chewy vitamins). How easy is to swallow now?
8. Eat the soft food item (e.g., banana). Notice the difference.
9. At the end, drink the liquid (e.g., water).
10. Remove all items from your mouth.

Reflection Questions

1. How did this simulation help you better understand how age-related changes to mouth and taste impact appetite?
2. How you think the taste can affect your psychological and physiological well-being?
3. In which ways did this experience allow you to relate to someone that is currently living with age-related taste disorders?