

Correlations between gustatory, olfactory, cognitive function, and age in healthy women

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Aging is a progressive physiological degeneration associated to a decline in chemosensory processes, cognitive abilities, and reduction in synaptic plasticity. Biological bases of ageing are still not completely understood, and many theories have been proposed. This study aimed to evaluate the occurrence of age-related changes affecting the chemosensory function (gustatory and olfactory) and general cognitive abilities and their potential associations in women. To this aim, 319 women (age range from 18 to 92 years) were recruited and divided into four different age groups: 18-34 years, 35-49 years, 50-64 years, and ≥65 years. Our results confirm that in women gustatory, olfactory, and cognitive functions decline, though in different manner during aging. Olfactory and cognitive function showed a slight decline along the first three age-classes with a dramatic decrease after age 65 years, while gustatory function decreased more gradually. Olfactory and gustatory deficits may have a high degree of predictivity for general cognitive function as well as for specific cognitive subdomains such as visuospatial/executive abilities, language, memory, and attention. Our study highlights the importance of using chemosensory assessments for the early diagnosis of cognitive decline and for the development of appropriate personalized risk prevention strategies.

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