

Loss of scent sense linked to Alzheimer's

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A new study shows seniors who have trouble identifying scents are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than people who knew soap smell from cinnamon.

They also were at higher risk of mild cognitive impairment, a condition that often strikes before Alzheimer's, the Chicago Sun-Times reported Tuesday.

Researchers followed 589 Chicago-area people who were an average age of 80 and began the study with no cognitive impairments.

The odors volunteers were asked to identify were banana, onion, soap, cinnamon, lemon, black pepper, smoke, paint thinner, pineapple, gasoline, rose and chocolate.

Test subjects who got four out of 12 wrong were 50 percent more likely to develop mild cognitive impairment than those who got only one wrong.

Although there is no way to prevent Alzheimer's, there are several drugs in development that might be able to slow the progression of the disease if it is detected early enough, which is one reason why scientists are looking into ways to test who is at risk for the illness.

The Rush University Medical Center study is published in the Archives of General Psychiatry.

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