

Oxytocin helps people feel more extraverted

December 9 2011

First dates, job interviews or Christmas cocktail parties can be stressors for some people. Such social rites of passage have no doubt made shy or introverted individuals wish for a magic potion that could make them feel like socialites, yet the answer might actually come from a nasal spray.

New research from Concordia University, published in the journal *Psychopharmacology*, has found that an intranasal form of oxytocin can improve self-perception in social situations. Oxytocin, a hormone naturally released following childbirth or during social bonding periods, has recently been investigated for its impact on social behaviors.

"Our study shows oxytocin can change how people see themselves, which could in turn make people more sociable," says senior author Mark Ellenbogen, Canada Research Chair in Developmental Psychopathology at Concordia University and a member of the Centre for Research in Human Development. "Under the effects of oxytocin, a person can perceive themselves as more extroverted, more open to new ideas and more trusting."

Some 100 men and women, between the ages of 18 and 35, were recruited for the study. To be eligible, participants couldn't take medication, suffer from a current or past mental disorder, use recreational drugs or smoke cigarettes.

Participants inhaled oxytocin from a nasal spray and completed questionnaires on how they felt 90 minutes later. Participants were

evaluated for neuroticism, extraversion, openness to new experiences, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

"Participants who self-administered intranasal oxytocin reported higher ratings of extraversion and openness to experiences than those who received a placebo," says first author Christopher Cardoso, a graduate student in the Concordia Department of Psychology and a member of the Centre for Research in Human Development. "Specifically, oxytocin administration amplified personality traits such as warmth, trust, altruism and openness."

The study builds on previous experimental research at Concordia that has shown intranasal [oxytocin](#) can influence how people perceive their ability to cope with difficult circumstances.

More information: www.springerlink.com/content/d48r3h445q2731t1

Provided by Concordia University

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