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Study Finds That Peppermint and Cinnamon Lower Drivers' Frustration And Increase Alertness

The scent of peppermint or cinnamon may keep you more alert and decrease your frustration when you're behind the wheel.

That's according to the results of a recent study led by Dr. Bryan Raudenbush, Director of Undergraduate Research and associate professor of psychology at Wheeling Jesuit University in Wheeling, WV.

According to the study, both cinnamon and peppermint led to increased ratings of alertness and lower frustration. Cinnamon also decreased drivers' fatigue ratings.

Dr. Raudenbush and WJU students Trevor Cessna, Will Esgro, and Ricky Yahn will present the results of the study, *Effects Of Odor Administration On Driving Performance, Safety, Alertness, And Fatigue*, during the 2006 Third Annual Undergraduate Research Day, Wednesday, February 1, in the Capitol Rotunda in Charleston, WV.

The study builds on Dr. Raudenbush's past research, which indicated the odors of peppermint and cinnamon enhance motivation, performance, and alertness, decrease fatigue, and serve as central nervous system stimulants.

"Given these results, it is reasonable to expect that the presentation of peppermint or cinnamon odor while driving may produce a more alert and conscientious driver, and minimize the fatigue associated with prolonged driving," says Dr. Raudenbush.

"In general, prolonged driving led to increased anger, fatigue, and physical demand, and decreased vigor. However, fatigue ratings were decreased in the cinnamon condition. Both cinnamon and peppermint administration led to increased ratings of alertness in comparison to the no-odor control condition over the course of the driving scenario. Periodic administration of these odors over long term driving may prove beneficial in maintaining alertness and decreasing highway accidents and fatalities," says Dr. Raudenbush.

Results Summary:

- Peppermint is associated with decreased anxiety while driving.
- Peppermint is associated with decreased fatigue while driving.
- Peppermint and cinnamon are associated with decreased driving frustration.
- Peppermint and cinnamon are associated with decreased temporal demand while driving.
- Peppermint and cinnamon are associated with greater levels of driving alertness.

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