

Why men's faces may give clues to a long, alert life

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SUPERMODEL Kate Moss and actress Cate Blanchett are lucky enough to be born with symmetrical faces.

Now Scottish psychologists have discovered there are health benefits for men who are born with the distinguishing feature.

Research by psychologists at University of Edinburgh's School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences has found that the more symmetrical a man's face, the more likely he is to remain mentally alert in later life.

The research team measured the facial symmetry of a sample of men and women and related this to their performance in reasoning and reaction-time tests.

Findings showed that facial symmetry in men is linked to how the body and mind will age, according to the study, published in the *Evolution and Human Behaviour* journal.

Comparable results were not found in women, which the researchers speculate could be because of the sex-specific effects of DNA on ageing, or because women live about four years longer than men on average and cognitive functions decline rapidly in the last years before death.

The researchers say that the findings show a link between physical condition and men-

tal decline, and that facial symmetry may be a reflection of the developmental stability in a man's body.

Research leader Dr Lars Penke said: "Previous research has suggested that cognitive decline is an aspect of body-wide ageing. This link could show that facial symmetry can be used as a marker which could predict this decline."

This is the first study to explore this link. Scientists have already found a connection between symmetrical faces and health, physical attractiveness and beauty. Last year, the University of New Mexico found that symmetrical human faces are more beautiful to the opposite sex and women partnered to men with symmetrical bodies have better sex lives.

