

## Face it: you'll stay in better shape with regular features

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MEN with regular features are likely to be in better mental shape at the end of their lives, research has shown.

Psychologists found that men with higher levels of facial sym-

metry—having faces with matching left and right sides—were less prone to mental decline between the ages of 79 and 83.

The team compared reasoning and reaction time test scores with measurements of facial symmetry in 216 men and women studied since 1932. The

results showed that facial symmetry in men—but not women—was linked to the effects of ageing on mental processes.

The findings are published today in the journal *Evolution and Human Behaviour*.

Facial symmetry may be a reflection of stability in men,

indicating fewer disturbances such as diseases, toxins, malnutrition or harmful genetic mutations during an individual's development.

Dr Lars Penke, of Edinburgh University, who led the study, 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."

Previous research has shown associations between facial symmetry and general health and perceived attractiveness.

