



Managing taste changes

This information is a guide to help you deal with your taste changes until you can talk to your doctor. It is not intended to replace medical advice.

Surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and some medicines are all treatments which may cause taste change. However it is usually temporary. Please tell your doctor if you notice white patches in your mouth, or if you have a persistent 'bad taste' in your mouth as this may indicate you have an infection.

If your taste changes, the following tips may make your food easier to eat and more enjoyable:

- try eating foods which you like the taste of
- if food tastes bitter, it may be helpful to avoid red meat, sour juices, coffee, tea, tomatoes and chocolate
- if food tastes too sweet, try cooking with lemon juice, herbs, vinegar or mint. However they may not be advisable if you have a sore mouth, or are receiving radiotherapy to the mouth and throat
- it is important to keep your mouth and nasal passage moist. This can help with being able to taste flavours. Drink plenty during the day. It may also help to use steam to moisten your nostrils
- add wine or beer to soups and sauces and use marinades, soy sauce or ready made sauces to enhance flavour
- sweet flavoured drinks, carbonated drinks and ice-lollies can all help you cope with a change in taste. If you go off the taste of tea or coffee, try herbal teas instead
- add seasoning, sugar or other flavourings to meals

- try eating meals at room temperature if you have very little taste. However you may find that cold foods taste nicer than hot foods
- if your mouth tastes metallic try using plastic cutlery
- try rinsing your mouth with fizzy water before meals
- try eating small pieces of fresh fruit such as pineapple or melon. These can be very refreshing (although not if you have a sore mouth)
- gently clean your mouth and teeth after meals. Good mouth care is essential
- avoid using mouthwashes which contain alcohol or strong flavours as these may alter the taste of foods

It is worth trying different flavours or foods you may not have enjoyed before as your taste has changed. It is also worth trying foods again a few weeks later, as your taste may have gone back to normal.

Further information about taste changes.

Information is available in the booklet from Macmillan Cancer Support: Eating problems and cancer.

This is available from the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre or from Macmillan Cancer Support at www.macmillan.org.uk

If you would like further advice please contact the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Dietitian, Tel: 020 3826 2129.



This publication has been produced by the Information team at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre. Contributors include professionals, patients and carers from Mount Vernon Cancer Centre who have expertise and experience in the topics covered by this publication. All our publications are reviewed and updated regularly. If you would like any details of the references used to write this information please contact the LJMC on 020 3826 2555.