

## Taste and Smell Changes During Cancer Treatment

Cancer and its treatments may change your sense of taste and smell. How foods taste can change from day to day. This can affect your appetite. Choose foods that look and smell good to you. Try experimenting with new foods, marinades, spices and ways of preparing what you eat. Here are some hints that can help your food taste and smell better.

First, you may want to try rinsing your mouth before each meal with the following solution: Dissolve  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon baking soda in 1 quart of water.

It is also important to practice good oral hygiene.

### If Food Has No Flavor

- Use herbs such as mint, basil, oregano, tarragon, and rosemary. Spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg, and paprika can also add flavor.
- Add onion, garlic, ginger, or other seasonings.
- A small amount of butter or other fat can help food taste better.
- A few drops of lemon juice can also brighten the taste of your food. Try marinating your meat in acids such as orange juice or vinegar.
- Use condiments such as barbecue sauce, ketchup, and mustard.
- Try recipes that include vinegar and cooking wine.
- Add fruit to meals or smoothies. Tart fruits may have a better flavor such as citrus fruits and berries.
- Try eating frozen fruit to enhance your taste buds.

### If Food Tastes Too Sweet

- Citrus can make foods taste less sweet. Start by adding 5–10 drops of lemon or lime juice. You can add more until the sweet taste is less noticeable.
- Eat salty foods with sweet foods. You can also add a dash of salt to food that is too sweet.
- Add buttermilk, plain yogurt, extra milk, or instant coffee powder to milkshakes or prepared nutritional drinks.

### If Food Tastes Too Bitter

- Eat sweet fruits such as melons, mango or cherries with meals.
- Add small amounts of molasses, maple syrup, or agave nectar to your food.
- Use fresh fruits and vegetables in recipes.
- Try cold dishes. They may taste better than hot foods.

### If Food Tastes Too Salty

- Try adding  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon lemon juice.
- Adding a little sugar may make some foods taste less salty.
- Limit processed, high-salt foods such as chips.
- Use salt-free seasonings and spices.

### If Food Tastes Metallic

- Use plastic utensils instead of metal.
- Add fats such as butter or nut butter.
- Try adding sweetener such as molasses, agave nectar, or maple syrup.
- Adding a few drops of lemon juice to your foods may also help.
- If meat doesn't taste the way you remember, try other protein foods such as cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, beans (examples: black, pinto, lima, red, navy), fresh fish, poultry, nuts, and eggs.
- You can also try water flavoring drops or infusing your water with fresh fruit, mint or combination of both.

### If Food Leaves an Aftertaste

- Clean your mouth with a soft toothbrush and gentle toothpaste.
- Use gum, candy, or mints after eating. This will help with aftertastes and keep your mouth moist.
- Sip on orange juice, pineapple juice, lemonade, or limeade after meals.
- Drink plenty of water.

### **If Food or Drinks Smell Unpleasant**

- Choose foods that don't need to be cooked such as cold sandwiches, yogurt and fruit, or cold cereal and milk.
- Serve foods cold or at room temperature. Hot foods can smell stronger.
- Cover drinks with a lid and drink through a straw.
- If possible, stay out of the kitchen while food cooks.
- Use a kitchen fan when cooking.
- Try cooking outdoors.
- Eat in a cool, well-ventilated place where no food is cooking.

The registered dietitians at Huntsman Cancer Institute's Linda B. and Robert B. Wiggins Wellness and Integrative Health Center provide personalized nutrition counseling for patients with all types of cancer.

**For more information about taste changes or to make an appointment, call 801-587-4585.**