

Changes in Taste and Smell

Cancer and its treatments can cause changes in your senses of taste. This change can affect your appetite and the amount you are able to eat. Remember that your goal is to stay well-nourished during treatment to enable your body to fight the cancer and heal quickly. This handout may provide a few suggestions to help with the change in taste and improve your intake.

Don't give up on certain foods. What tastes *off* today may taste OK next week.

For Taste Changes:

- rinse your mouth with salt and baking soda before eating.
(mix $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon baking soda in 4 cups/ 1 liter of water)
- Rinse with sparkling water or ginger ale before meals.
- brush your teeth before and after eating.
- Avoid cigarette smoking
- try fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables instead of canned.
- freeze and eat fruits such as cantaloupe, grapes, mandarin oranges and watermelon.
- many foods are more tolerable when cold or at room temperature.
- add 1-2 teaspoons finely ground, decaffeinated coffee to a chocolate or vanilla supplement (Ensure/ Boost). This will decrease the sweetness and give the shake a "mocha" flavor.
- If meat doesn't taste good, try eggs, fish, Greek yogurt, yogurt, beans, nuts, nut butters for protein.
- Ask people to eat with you, it's easier to eat if you have someone to eat with.

For Metallic Taste:

- try plastic utensils or chopsticks.
- Drink beverages from bottles, not cans.
- add lemon juice to water or foods.
- suck on sugar-free lemon drops, sour balls, gum or mints- this can also help stimulate saliva for those with dry mouth
- experiment with herbs, spices and marinades to make the flavor of your food stronger. Try onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, tarragon, rosemary, BBQ sauce, mustard, ketchup or mint.
- horseradish or mustard if you don't have mouth sores.
- Marinate meats in acidic dressings, fruit juice or wine. For example, Italian dressing.

For Changes in Smell:

- Cover drinks and beverages and use a straw
- Choose cold foods that don't need to be cooked
- Avoid eating in rooms that are stuffy or too warm
- Don't be present in the kitchen when food is being prepared
- Eat outside of the kitchen or wait until food is slightly cool before entering

F.A.S.S.

“Enhancing Flavor and Dealing with Taste Changes”

Use this method to improve flavor and taste after the meal is done. Add a pinch or a drop to each fork or spoonful.



Fat – olive oil
Acid – lemon
Salt – sea salt
Sweet – maple syrup



- Acid and salt add high notes (add a punch)
- Fat and sweet add roundness and fullness
- Choose real maple syrup – not what we purchase to use on pancakes
 - Taste while cooking, taste and add as you go along
- After your meal is prepared, if it is not appealing, add a pinch of sea salt, pepper, or a squeeze of lemon or drop of maple syrup.
 - A little goes a long way, start small and add more if needed.

Developed by Rebecca Katz, chef and author of *One Bite at a Time*