



**ONCOLOGY NUTRITION**

**COPING WITH TASTE CHANGES**

Many people experience taste changes during treatment. Taste changes will vary with the kind of treatment you are receiving and will be individual for each person.

It is important to do some experimenting with food flavours and to keep a list of those foods that taste good to you. The following ideas can make it easier to choose appealing foods and can help to prevent unwanted weight loss.

**1. To take away an unpleasant mouth taste**

- rinse with baking soda and water (1/4 tsp to 1 cup) before meals
- rinse often between meals as well
- try sugarless gum or mints
- brush your teeth and tongue often using a soft toothbrush

**2. If foods taste strong or bitter**

- try them cold or at room temperature
- eat mild tasting foods such as:

baking powder biscuits	custard
bread soaked in milk	perogies
hot cereal with cream	steamed rice
milk – hot or cold	tofu (bean curd)
unsalted crackers and cream cheese	
potato mashed with milk and butter	
vanilla flavoured puddings	
plain noodles and butter	
eggnog with a sprinkle of sugar or vanilla	

**3. When meat tastes bitter or metallic**

- try eating it cold or at room temperature
- choose other protein foods such as:

gelatin salads with cottage cheese	yogurt
cold sliced meat, chicken or ham	sausage rolls
canned tuna or salmon	cheese
quiche – hot or cold	deviled eggs
cottage cheese	milk, milkshakes
custard, pudding	

- marinating meat, chicken, fish may help mask the bitter taste. Try marinades such as:

orange juice	lemon juice
lemonade	Italian dressing
vinegar	sweet and sour sauce
wine, soy sauce	teriyaki sauce

- avoid meats that have a strong smell
- eating with plastic utensils may help decrease the metallic taste

**4. If foods taste overly sweet**

- try adding a pinch of salt to decrease the sweetness of foods such as:

puddings	canned fruit
ice-cream	milkshakes

## 5. If foods taste too salty

- try a variety of low-salt or sodium-reduced products
- try adding sugar to help mask the salty flavour

For example, add sugar to:

soups	gravy
juice	salad dressings
cottage cheese	casseroles
mashed potatoes	

## 6. If foods taste bland after a few mouthfuls

- try to enhance their taste by having alternating bites of different tasting foods within a meal.
- Some food ideas are:
  - cottage cheese & pineapple
  - grilled cheese sandwich & tomato juice
  - canned fruit & plain yogurt
- use herbs and seasonings in food preparation, such as:
  - thyme, parsley, or oregano** on beans, fish, cheese, poultry, meat, vegetables
  - basil** on eggs, vegetables, salad or fish
  - tarragon** on eggs, poultry, meat or salads
  - garlic** on meat, cheese, poultry or salad
  - seasoned salts, lemon pepper**
- you may enjoy strong flavoured foods, such as:

pizza, spaghetti or lasagna	salsa
marinated meats	pepperoni
pickles, olives	BBQ foods
cured meats	chocolate

## 7. If salty foods taste good

- try sprinkling some salt to perk up bland tasting foods. You can even add salt to juice, fruit, pudding or hot cereal
- some salty foods to try are:

cheese and crackers	instant or canned soups
preseasoned rice mixes	salted peanut butter
instant oriental noodles	dried potato dishes
strong cheese	tomato juice
cottage cheese	pickles, olives
bacon, ham, corned beef	mashed potatoes and gravy
salted nuts and potato chips	

## 8. If sweet foods are appealing

- you may want to sprinkle some sugar onto soups, cereals, casseroles, meats and vegetables
- some sweet foods to try are:

iced cakes and pastries	pudding, trifle
cookies with filling	ice-cream, sherbet
fruit flavoured yogurt	chocolate milk
sugar donuts	pancakes with syrup
marshmallows	milkshakes, eggnog
hot milk with honey	fruit canned in syrup
jello with sweetened whipped cream	
sugar coated cereal (have dry or with milk)	

## 9. Sour tasting foods can:

- stimulate your taste buds
- increase saliva
- take away that “cotton mouth” feeling
- some foods to try are:

cranberry or cranapple juice	plain yogurt
grapefruit or orange juice	sour cream
pickles	sourdough bread
sweet and sour sauce	lemonade

**lemon juice** or **vinegar** on: meat, fish, chicken, eggs, soup

Yours taste sensation will eventually improve. Until it does, you may find your food selection somewhat limited. Ask your doctor or dietitian if you should take a multivitamin/mineral supplement.

Eat the foods you tolerate best, even if you have to eat the same foods for a while.

This information is not meant to replace the medical counsel of your doctor or individual consultation with a registered dietitian. This information may only be used in its entirety.

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