Coping with Taste Changes

Introduction

Sometimes familiar and previously well liked foods may taste different, unpleasant or have no taste at all. Occasionally your taste buds may be very sensitive to sweetness or sourness. These symptoms may be the result of infection, medication, or may occur after certain treatments. Usually taste changes are temporary.

Different flavours, textures and temperatures may improve your ability to taste and enjoy food. This leaflet gives ideas on adapting flavours which may help food become more acceptable again.

As your taste returns to normal, go back to your usual diet.

If you are still struggling, ask to speak to a Dietitian.

Try the following suggestions

- Eat the foods you like. Re-try foods every few weeks as your taste may change.
- Choose a variety of flavours each day such as sour, spicy and sweet.
- Adding strong flavours to foods, i.e. marinades/spices/herbs can help to improve taste. Sauces & gravies can also help.
- Select foods that smell good to help improve your desire to eat.
- Why not try stronger versions of your favourite foods, i.e. mature cheese/smoked ham etc.
- Try foods cold or at room temperature rather than piping hot.
- Try sharp tasting foods and drinks that are refreshing eg, fresh fruit, fruit juice, citrus fruit, boiled sweets, lemonade, tonic water. Sucking sweets or mints may freshen your mouth.
- If you cannot take tea or coffee, try alternatives such as lemon, fruit, herb or china tea, cocoa, hot chocolate, Horlicks, Bovril, fruit juice or fizzy drinks.
- Drink plenty of fluids. At least 8 cups per day. Drink frequently.
- Use plastic utensils if foods taste metallic.
- It is important to keep your mouth clean and brush teeth regularly and thoroughly. Brushing your tongue or using a mouthwash may be helpful so ask your doctor or clinic staff about appropriate products. Visit the dentist regularly.
**Ideas to flavour food**

- Experiment with herbs and spices to perk up the taste and smell of your food eg try garlic, oregano, basil, black pepper.

- Add chopped onion, bacon bits, grated cheese or parmesan cheese to dishes.

- If you find sweet tastes unpleasant, try using sharp or tart tasting foods to disguise the flavour eg, lemon juice, grapefruit juice, spices, rhubarb.

- Make tarts or pies with fruits like gooseberries or rhubarb. Do not add sugar. Sieve, blend or liquidise these fruits and mix with custard, cream or blancmange to make a fruit fool.

- Add spices to puddings eg, nutmeg to rice pudding or egg custard, cinnamon to stewed or baked apple, ginger to cold fruits like melon or grapefruit.

**Disguising Meat**

- Frequently people develop an aversion to meat. Soaking or marinating meat or chicken for a couple of hours before cooking will improve the flavour and tenderise the meat. Wine, fruit juice, sweet and sour sauce, tandoori, and barbeque sauce can all be used as marinades. Fish can also be marinated.

- Try poultry, fish, eggs, cheese, beans and pulses as these are all good substitutes for red meat.

- Cold meats may taste better than hot meats. Try having them with pickles and chutneys.

**Recipes to try**

**Wine Marinade** - suitable for pork or veal.

Mix 1 sliced onion, ¼ pint dry white wine, 1 bay leaf, 6 cracked peppercorns, 4 parsley stalks and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Pour over meat and refrigerate for 2 hours before cooking, basting occasionally.

**Simple Marinade** - suitable for beef and lamb.

Mix 2 tablespoons olive oil with 1 tablespoon vinegar or lemon juice, 1 finely chopped onion and seasoning. Pour over meat and refrigerate for 2 hours before cooking, basting occasionally.

**Marinade for Fish**

Combine together juice of 2 limes, 4 tbsp of vegetable oil, 1-2 cloves crushed garlic, 3 tbsp fish sauce, 4 tbsp fresh coriander, salt & pepper. Pour over fish and refrigerate for 2 hours before cooking.