

Food Fact - 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 sweet or sour flavours, or foods may leave a metallic taste.

These symptoms may be the result of infection, medication, or may occur after certain treatments. Usually taste changes are temporary. As your taste returns to normal, go back to your usual diet. If you are still struggling, ask to speak to a dietitian. If you have a sore mouth ask your nurse or doctor for advice.

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 to become more acceptable again.

Try the Following Suggestions

- Eat the foods you enjoy. Re-try foods every few weeks as your taste may change
- Choose a variety of flavours each day such as sour, spicy and sweet
- Add a sauce or gravy especially if you also have a dry mouth
- Select foods that smell good to help improve your desire to eat
- 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, e.g. fresh fruit, fruit juice, citrus fruit, boiled sweets, lemonade or tonic water
- Suck sweets or mints to help freshen your mouth
- Try alternative drinks such as lemon, fruit or herbal teas, cocoa, hot chocolate, malted drinks, Bovril, fruit juice or fizzy drinks
- Drink plenty of fluids, at least 8 cups per day and drink frequently
- Use plastic cutlery if foods taste metallic
- Keep your mouth clean, brush teeth regularly and thoroughly
- Brush your tongue or use a mouthwash. Ask your doctor or clinic staff about appropriate products and visit the dentist regularly

Ideas To Flavour Food

- Add strong flavours to foods, e.g. marinades/spices/herbs/Worcester sauce/extra salt or sugar can help to improve taste
- Experiment with herbs and spices to perk up the taste and smell of your food, e.g. garlic, oregano, basil and black pepper
- Add chopped onion, bacon bits, grated cheese or parmesan cheese to dishes
- If you find sweet tastes unpleasant, try sharp or tart tasting foods to disguise the flavour e.g. lemon juice, grapefruit juice, spices, rhubarb

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- Make tarts or pies with fruit like gooseberries or rhubarb but do not add sugar
- Sieve, blend or liquidise fruit and mix with custard, cream or blancmange to make a fruit fool
- Add spices to puddings such as 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

- Soak or marinate meat, chicken or fish for a couple of hours before cooking to improve the flavour
- Use wine, fruit juice, sweet and sour sauce, tandoori and barbeque sauces as marinades
- Try poultry, fish, eggs, cheese, beans and pulses as these are all good meat substitutes
- 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 (tbsp) olive oil. Pour over meat and refrigerate for 2 hours before cooking, basting occasionally.

Simple Marinade - suitable for beef and lamb.

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

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 and pepper. Pour over fish and refrigerate for 2 hours before cooking.

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