

# Coping with taste changes



**Information for patients**

Sheffield Dietetics



**PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



## **Why has my taste changed?**

Sometimes familiar and previously well liked foods can taste different or unpleasant, or may not taste of anything at all. These symptoms may be the result of infection, medication or treatment. For most people taste changes are temporary, however some treatments can cause long-term changes; your doctor will be able to advise further.

## **What can I do to improve the taste of foods?**

You may find some of the following suggestions useful, although not all will be suitable if you have a sore mouth:

- Vary the flavours you use each day (such as spicy and sweet).
- Try foods that taste and smell good to you, this helps to improve your desire to eat.
- Try foods regularly as your taste may change over a few weeks.
- Try foods that you would not usually eat as they won't taste unusual.
- Sharp tasting foods like fresh fruit, fruit juices and boiled sweets / mints may be refreshing and leave a pleasant taste in your mouth. Try fresh or tinned grapefruit, pineapple, lemon or orange. Sharp fizzy drinks can also stimulate your taste buds.
- Chewing sugar free gum can help improve the freshness of your mouth.
- Try to drink plenty of fluids. Aim for two litres per day. If you cannot take tea or coffee try malt drinks, hot chocolate, fruit tea.
- Keep your mouth clean. Remember to brush your teeth regularly. A mouthwash may also be helpful, ask your doctor about suitable mouthwashes.
- Experiment with different flavours, textures and temperatures – cold food or food at room temperature can often taste better than piping hot food.

**If food tastes bland** try using herbs and spices, for example rosemary, tarragon, chilli or garlic to flavour your foods. Choose foods that have a strong smell or taste.

**If food tastes metallic** cold or room temperature foods might taste better. Try plastic utensils and avoid cooking in metallic containers.

Try marinating meat in fruit juice or wine or serving it with a strong sauce such as sweet and sour or curry sauce. Add strong flavoured sauces to foods, such as Worcester sauce, barbeque sauce, mustard or tomato ketchup.

If you are unable to tolerate red meat try other protein foods such as chicken, fish, eggs, and dairy products such as milk and yoghurt.

**If foods taste sweet** try more savoury foods such as cheese and crackers, crisps and nuts. You can also try using stronger seasonings or add lemon juice.

**If food tastes salty** try using reduced / low salt products and avoid adding salt to foods. Try to use more sweet foods such as fruit, ice cream, cakes or milkshakes.

**If food tastes bitter** try to avoid foods and drinks with artificial sweeteners, such as sugar free and diet drinks or sugar free chewing gums. Mild tasting foods such as vanilla flavoured puddings, milk, noodles, rice, custard and mashed potato can be tried also. Sweeter foods can taste better.

Name: .....

Date: .....

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