



## Managing taste changes

This information is intended as a guide to help you deal with your taste changes until you can talk to your doctor. It is not intended to replace medical advice.

Surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and some medicines are all treatments which may cause taste change. Cancer patients often complain of this symptom. However it is usually temporary. Please tell your doctor if you notice white patches in your mouth, or if you have a persistent 'bad taste' in your mouth as this may indicate you have an infection.

If your taste changes, the following tips may make your food easier to eat and more enjoyable:

- Try eating the foods which you like to taste
- Don't try to eat the foods which are not appealing or do not taste nice
- If food tastes bitter, it may be helpful to avoid red meat, sour juices, coffee, tea, tomatoes and chocolate
- If food tastes too sweet, try cooking with lemon juice, herbs, vinegar or mint. However they may not be advisable if you have a sore mouth, or are receiving radiotherapy to the mouth and throat
- Add wine or beer to soups and sauces and use marinades, soy sauce or ready made sauces to enhance flavour
- Sweet flavoured drinks, carbonated drinks and ice-lollies can all help you cope with a change in taste. If you go off the taste of tea or coffee, try herbal teas instead.

- Add lots of seasoning, sugar or other flavourings to meals
- Try eating meals at room temperature if you have very little taste. However you may find that cold foods taste nicer than hot foods
- Try rinsing your mouth with fizzy water before meals
- Try eating small pieces of fresh fruit such as pineapple or melon. These can be very refreshing (although not if you have a sore mouth)
- Gently clean your mouth and teeth after meals. Good mouth care is essential.
- Avoid using mouthwashes which contain alcohol or strong flavours as these may alter the taste of foods

It is worth trying different flavours or foods you may not have enjoyed before as your taste has changed. It is also worth trying foods again a few weeks later, as your taste may have gone back to normal.

### Further information if you are experiencing taste changes.

Information is available the Diet and cancer booklet from Macmillan Cancer Support

This is available from the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre or from Macmillan Cancer Support at [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

If you would like further advice please contact the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Dietitian, Tel: 01923 844366.