

Nutritional counselling

If changes in taste affect your daily diet, we recommend that you consult a specialist for nutritional advice. They can advise you on how to adapt your diet and avoid weight loss or malnutrition.

Further information on this topic

«Nutrition and cancer», website of the Swiss Cancer League, article on this topic

«Nutrition in cancer», brochure, Swiss Cancer League (2020)

«RECIPES rewritten», signature recipes by star chefs created for people with taste impairments, Swiss Cancer League

«Impairment of the sense of taste and smell in people with cancer», tips from the Swiss Cancer League

«Inflamed oral mucosa (oral mucositis)», Symptom Navi Flyer (2020)

Changes in taste

Good to know

Changes in taste influence our appetite. You can perceive food or odours in a different way (bitter/metallic), more strongly (saltier or sweeter) or less strongly.

Changes in taste can have different causes:

- Tumour in the head or neck area
- Radiotherapy in the head or neck area
- Antitumour therapy or other medication
- Open sores in the mouth or dry oral mucosa

Changes or loss of taste usually disappear a few weeks after the end of treatment.

Discuss changes in taste with your treatment team if they restrict your food intake or affect your quality of life.



Changes in taste

You feel...	Or you notice...	What you can do yourself...
	- You notice changes in taste without having adjust to your diet - You maintain your usual calorie intake	- If you are sensitive to odours, prefer cold food or at room temperature. Use a straw for your drinks. - Drink regularly. You can use sugar-free lozenges or xylitol-based chewing gum to moisten your mouth. - Ensure good oral hygiene as described in the flyer "Inflamed oral mucosa (oral mucositis)". - Avoid alcohol and tobacco. If you smoke, rinse your mouth afterwards. Do not use alcohol-based mouthwashes.
	- Your changes in taste have led you to adjust your diet - Your calorie intake remains sufficient, or your weight remains stable	<u>Your food tastes or smells:</u> <u>metallic</u>: avoid artificial sweeteners; marinate red meat or replace it with other protein sources such as chicken, fish, pulses, eggs, tofu, soya or quorn-based meat substitutes; favour fresh fruit and vegetables instead of food in metal cans or canned drinks; use plastic or glass glasses and cutlery instead of metal. <u>too salty</u>: Avoid salty, industrially produced dishes and foods and add a pinch of sugar or lemon juice. <u>too sweet</u>: try adding a pinch of salt or lemon juice. <u>in case of loss of flavour</u>: Give preference to foods with a strong flavour (onions, garlic, cheese, bacon) and use spices and herbs.
	- Sudden loss of taste - You choke or cough frequently when eating - You are eating less than usual or have lost weight - You are disgusted by food - You have pain when swallowing, or your tongue is cracked or coated with a persistent white film even after brushing	Contact your treatment team