



Nutritional counselling

If food tastes different and it is hard to eat, talk to a nutrition specialist. They can give you simple tips to help you eat well and avoid losing weight or becoming weak.

Further information on this topic

- «Eat Well During Cancer» (World Cancer Research Fund UK, 2020) - Easy recipes and tips for healthy eating
- «Nutrition for People Living with Cancer» (Cancer Council Australia, 2025) - Simple advice on nutrition for people with cancer, their families, and friends
- «Understanding Taste and Smell Changes» (Cancer Council Australia, 2025) - How cancer and its treatments can affect taste and smell, with practical tips to help manage these changes and maintain adequate nutrition

See other Symptom Navi Flyers

 «Inflamed lining of the mouth (oral mucositis)», Symptom Navi Flyer (2020)

Changes in taste

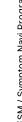
Good to know

Changes in taste can affect your appetite. Food or drinks may taste different: bitter or metallic, stronger (saltier or sweeter) or weaker (less taste). Changes in taste can have different causes:

- Tumour in the head or neck area
- Radiotherapy in the head or neck area
- Cancer therapy or other medication
- Mouth sores or dry mouth (oral mucosa)

Taste usually gets better a few weeks after treatment ends. Tell your treatment team if these changes make it hard to eat or lower your quality of life.





Changes in taste

| You feel | Or you notice | What you can do yourself |
|----------|---|--|
| 000 | You notice changes in taste but you do not need to change your diet. You keep eating your normal amount of food. | If strong smells bother you, choose cold food or food at room temperature. Use a straw for your drinks. Drink often. You can use sugar-free lozenges or xylitol chewing gum to keep your mouth moist. Keep your mouth clean as described in the flyer "Inflamed oral mucosa (oral mucositis)". Avoid alcohol and tobacco. If you smoke, rinse your mouth after. Do not use mouthwashes with alcohol. |
| | You changed your diet because of taste changes. Your weight is stable or you eat enough calories. | If food tastes metallic avoid artificial sweeteners; marinate red meat or eat other protein such as chicken, fish, pulses, eggs, tofu, soya or quorn; choose fresh fruit and vegetables instead of food in metal cans or canned drinks; use plastic or glass glasses and cutlery instead of metal. If food tastes too salty avoid salty, processed food and add a little sugar or lemon juice. If food tastes too sweet add a little salt or lemon juice. If food tastes no flavour choose strong flavour (onions, garlic, cheese, bacon) and use spices and herbs. |
| 000 | 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 sore, cracked or has a white coating that does not go away after brushing | Contact your treatment team |