

# Taste and Smell Changes

Cancer and cancer treatments can cause changes in your senses of taste and smell. How foods taste and smell can change from day to day, and these changes might affect your appetite. Experiment with the tips below to find what works for you.

## When Foods Have Little Flavor or an “Off” Taste

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- Blend fresh or frozen fruits into shakes, ice cream, or yogurt.
- Eat frozen fruits (such as whole grapes, blueberries, or mandarin orange pieces).
- Select fresh vegetables over canned or frozen as they may be more appealing.
- Choose foods with tart flavors like lemon wedges, citrus fruits, or lemonade. Avoid these acidic foods if you have a sore mouth or throat.
- Use marinades for meats to change the flavor. Add herbs, spices, lemon, vinegar, pickles, or strongly flavored sauces and condiments to season foods.

## For Bitter, Acidic, or Metallic Tastes

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- Eat sweet fruits like cantaloupe or watermelon with meals.
- Drink sweet or sour beverages like lemonade, apple juice, cranberry juice, or sweet tea. Add lemon juice or flavorings to water.
- Use strongly flavored spices or seasonings like onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, mustard, ketchup, or mint.
- Use plastic or bamboo utensils to reduce the sense of a metal taste in the mouth.
- Choose alternative protein sources like chicken, eggs, tofu, dairy foods, nuts, or beans.
- Try adding a sweetener or a squeeze of lemon to foods.
- Use sugar-free lemon drops, gum, or mints to improve the taste in your mouth.

## For Salty Taste

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- Choose foods that are naturally sweet like fruits, tomatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes, and yogurt.
- Use low-sodium products and don't use salt in recipes. Avoid dining out as these foods tend to be saltier.



## For Enhanced Sweet Taste

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- Choose bland or sour flavors.
- Dilute juices or serve them over ice.
- Choose vegetables rather than fruits.
- Try adding squeezed lemon to foods to overcome the sweet taste.

## When Smells Are Bothersome

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- Choose foods that do not need to be cooked like smoothies, sandwiches, cottage cheese, yogurt, puddings, nut butters, and fruit.
- Avoid foods with strong smells, like fish, onions, garlic, and cabbage.
- Serve foods cold or at room temperature.
- Avoid the kitchen during meal preparation and avoid cooking methods that take a long time, like meals prepared in a slow cooker.
- Eat in cool, well-ventilated rooms that don't have any strong smells.
- If beverages have unpleasant smells, place a lid on an open cup and drink through a straw.



### QUICK TIP

Good oral care is important.

- **Keep your mouth clean and healthy. Rinse and brush your teeth after meals and before bed.**
- **Before eating, rinse your mouth with a solution of 1 quart of water mixed with  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of baking soda.**