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## Tips to Make Food Taste Better!

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Taste buds have the ability to taste 5 flavors: sweet, salty, sour, bitterness and umami or “savory”. Taste and smell can sometimes change because of cancer and/or its treatments like medications, chemotherapy or radiation therapy. These changes can affect appetite, make food take on a bitter or metallic taste and sometimes make meal times less enjoyable. Fortunately, following some of the steps below could help make food taste better.

### If Food Seems Tasteless

- Try new textures. Add a puree of vegetables, fruit or protein to solid foods.
- Serve foods cold or at room temperature. This sometimes helps foods taste and smell better and easier to tolerate.
- Prepare or purchase foods that taste good to you. If you start disliking your favorite foods do not force yourself to eat them. Find a different food you like.
- Use more spices and flavoring, as tolerated.
  - Try new tastes or spices –like onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, or mint.
  - Try sauces like BBQ, mustard, ketchup or chutney.
  - Try marinating meat with citrus or fruit juices, vinegar, mustard or salad dressing.
- Make a shake—blend fresh fruits into ice cream or yogurt to increase nutrients. If you cannot tolerate milk—try lactose-free options.
- Season foods with tart flavors like lemon and other citrus fruits, vinegar and pickled foods. These foods help to stimulate taste and saliva.
- Skip this step if you have a sore mouth or throat.



## If Food Seems Bitter or Metallic



- Use plastic utensils, glass cups and plates.
- Pay attention to oral care by keeping mouth clean by rinsing and brushing (if your doctor allows it).
  - Try rinsing your mouth with a baking soda and salt mouthwash before eating. Mix 1 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon baking soda in 1 quart of water. Shake well before swishing and spitting.
- If meat tastes bitter, try using a marinade or fruit juice to add flavor. Consider a meatless alternative such as eggs, cheese, yogurt or beans.
- Try sugar-free lemon drops, gum, or mints to change the flavor in your mouth.

## If Food Seems Too Sweet

- Add a pinch of salt or a squeeze of lemon.
- Dilute juice or sweetened beverages with water or seltzer.
- Add plain yogurt or buttermilk to milkshakes or smoothies.

## If the Smell of Food Bothers You

- Avoid foods with strong odors and cover them with a lid when cooking.
- Open a window! Avoid eating in rooms that are stuffy or too warm.
- Experiment with different flavors.
- Cover beverages and drink through a straw (if your doctor allows).
- Choose foods that do not need to be cooked (yogurt, cheese, peanut butter sandwich).

If you are following a specific diet, such as reduced sodium or fat—speak to your dietitian or doctor about relaxing these recommendations to make sure you are getting the right nutrition.

