

How to Manage **Taste Changes** at Home

This guide will help you understand:

What is taste change?

What causes changes in taste?

What you can do to help manage your taste change.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

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What is Taste change?

A change in taste is common for people living with a chronic condition and is also a normal part of getting older.

Taste changes can vary from person to person. Sometimes people lose their sense of taste completely, it comes and goes or they have an unpleasant taste. Taste changes can lead to a lack of appetite, nausea and weight loss.



Tell your healthcare team if you have taste changes and are finding it difficult to manage.

What causes taste changes?

There are many reasons for taste changes, for example:

- **Medications:** Some medications like antibiotics, diuretics (also known as water pills), some blood pressure medication and antidepressants.
- **Treatments:** Like chemotherapy.
- **Other symptoms/conditions:** Like a common cold, throat infection or gum disease.
- **Getting Older:** As you age you can start to lose your taste buds or they become less sensitive.
- **Dry mouth:** Keeps flavors from reaching your taste buds.
- **Loss of smell:** Sense of smell affects the way food tastes.
- **Smoking:** Can dull your sense of smell and taste.

What you can do to help manage your taste change.

Managing taste changes works best when you play an active role.

- Try to figure out if there is a cause for your taste changes.
- Is it better or worse at different times?
- What helps or makes it worse?
- You may want to use a symptom diary to record information about your taste changes. Tracking this information will help you talk to healthcare team about your taste changes.

Physical steps you can try:

- **Eat food cold or at room temperature:** This will reduce strong tastes and smells and can help if you have nausea.

- **Eat smaller amounts of food more often:** Eat whatever you feel like eating, and try to eat every 3-4 hours. Keep snacks handy for when you feel like eating.
- **Add flavour to your food:** Use herbs and spices or salt free seasonings; add lemon, or lime juice.
- **Add sauces to your food:** Try applesauce, mint jelly, red pepper jelly or cranberry sauce with meals.
- **Chewing Gum:** Or sucking on sugar free candy can help with unpleasant tastes after eating.
- **Rinse your mouth:** Try doing this often, and before and after eating. Use water or club soda.
- **Brush your teeth:** Try brushing your teeth and tongue more than usual. Especially before and after eating.
- **Limit or stop:** Alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine to see if your symptoms get better. These can make your taste change worse.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

Speak with your healthcare team if taste changes are a problem for you. Your worries and questions are important to you and them.

- Let them know if you think your medical condition or medications are the reason for your taste change.
- Talk to them before taking over-the-counter medication, including vitamins and herbal remedies.

Tips on sharing your symptoms with your healthcare team:

Make some notes about your change of taste symptoms and tell your healthcare team about them.

- Has there been a change in your taste?
- How bad is it?
- When does it happen and how long does it last?
- What makes it better or worse? What have you tried already?
- Make a list of all the medications you are taking including over the counter medications.

Notes: _____
