



Food Habits while on Chemotherapy: General Tips

Many people experience taste changes during cancer treatment. Foods may have no taste or taste differently. Also, certain food smells may be bothersome.

Taste and smell changes can vary with the kind of treatment you are receiving and can be different for each person.

Experiment with food flavours and keep a list of those foods that taste good to you. This will help you to eat well and maintain good nutrition during your treatment.

Eat foods that taste good even if this means eating the same foods for a while. Your taste sensations will eventually improve.

Avoid any foods that do not taste right for you. Find substitutes for those foods so you will still get the important nutrients your body needs.

Foods/fluids that require less chewing may be better tolerated when you are experiencing taste changes.

Brush your teeth and tongue often using a soft toothbrush. Rinse with baking soda and water mouth rinse (1/4 tsp to 1 cup of water) throughout the day, especially before and after meals.

If foods taste metallic:

-Try eating them cold or at room temperature

-Try marinating meat, chicken and fish to help mask the bitter taste. -Try marinades such as lemon juice, sweet and sour sauce, wine, teriyaki or soy sauce, Italian dressing, or barbecue sauce

-Use plastic utensils or chopsticks instead of stainless steel utensils

-Some protein foods that may be well tolerated include:

- Milk, cheeses, yogurt, custards, puddings, milkshakes
- Devilled eggs
- Hummus, Cream Cheese, Greek Yogurt.

If fluids taste overly sweet, dilute them with water, soda water, tonic water or ice. Try adding a pinch of salt to decrease sweetness.

If foods taste too salty, try a variety of low salt or sodium-reduced products. You may also try adding sugar to help mask the salty flavour.

If foods taste bland:

-Flavour foods with condiments (barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, mint, soy sauce)

-Use herbs and seasonings in food preparation (thyme, parley, oregano, basil, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, seasoned salt, lemon pepper)

If strong food odors affect taste:

- ✓ Use a kitchen fan when cooking
- ✓ Use a microwave, covered pots, or an outdoor barbecue
- ✓ Sit by an open window
- ✓ Order 'take-out'
- ✓ Ask for help from family and friends
 - Try cold or room temperature foods such as: Milkshakes Cottage cheese and fruit
 - Yogurt Cream cheese on bagel Chicken salad Cheese on crackers
 - Ice-cream Puddings and custard

If you have a "cotton mouth" feeling in your mouth, try the following sour tasting foods to stimulate your taste buds and increase saliva:

- Lemonade, ice-tea, juices, plain yogurt, or sour cream
- Pickles
- Sweet and sour sauce
- Sugar free gums or tart candies

Follow up with your doctor or dietician if:

- *You have persistent taste changes that prevent you from being able to eat adequate amounts*
- *You have other side-effects such as nausea and vomiting that prevent you from eating and drinking*
- *You are losing weight without trying.*
- *Your food selection has been limited for a long time; you may need to take a multivitamin/mineral supplement.*