



# Tips For Those Experiencing Taste Changes

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Nutrition is very important during cancer treatment. Consuming enough calories and protein in your diet will help your body maintain strength and energy levels, fight infections, recover faster, and improve your tolerance to treatment.

Unfortunately, cancer treatment can cause side effects that may affect your ability to do so. For example, a low appetite, fatigue, taste changes, and pain can make preparing meals or finding foods you enjoy eating difficult.

Taste changes are very common during cancer treatment. Symptoms vary from person to person and may even change from day to day. You may find that you have less taste, an altered taste sensation, or an increased sensitivity to certain flavors. Here are some tips to make taste changes more tolerable, allowing you to provide your body with the nutrition it needs during treatment.

## Enhance the flavor of your foods

Add herbs and spices

- Black pepper, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, rosemary, basil, parsley, oregano, thyme, cumin, chili powder, ginger, etc.

Immerse your meats in a liquid marinade

- Sweet juices, vinegar dressings, wine
- Examples:
  - Sweet and sour pork with pineapple
  - Chicken with honey glaze

Add sauces and condiments to your foods

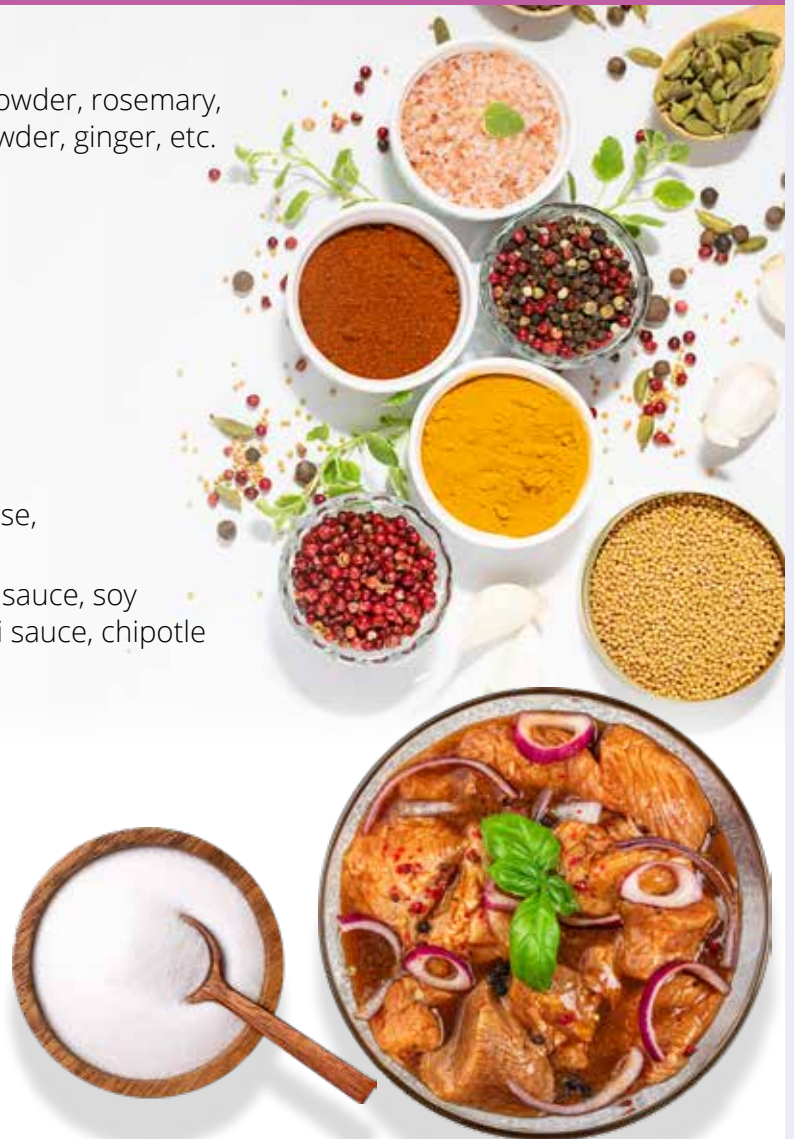
- Barbecue sauce, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, salad dressings, jelly
- Pesto, marinara sauce, tomato sauce, alfredo sauce, soy sauce, coconut aminos, peanut sauce, teriyaki sauce, chipotle sauce, cilantro lime crema, cranberry sauce

Add salt or sugar

- Salt decreases the sweetness of sugary foods
- Sugar decreases salty, bitter, or acidic tastes

Add tart flavors

- Squeeze fresh lemon or lime juice over your foods
- Add a splash of vinegar
- Top meals with pickled foods



## Avoid bad tastes during or after eating

Try ginger or peppermint

- Helps improve taste perception and reduce nausea

Drink plenty of fluids

- Dehydration can cause dry mouth that can further affect your taste

Suck on hard candies or chewing gum

- Helps remove bad tastes that may occur after eating
- Examples: lemon drops, mints, lollipops, root beer barrels

Rinse your mouth out before and after eating or drinking

- Helps clear your taste buds
- Use tea, ginger ale, or a saltwater and baking soda mixture
  - 1 cup (500 mL) warm water, 1 tsp baking soda, 1 tsp salt



## Be open to trying new foods

- Try new foods and flavors that you may have not considered before. Taste buds change. You may find that you now like foods you didn't like in the past
- Experiment with a new recipe
- Try different brands
- Keep a list of foods that taste good to you
- Alternate bites between different foods on your plate at meal times. Try to include foods with different textures
- Try the bad tasting food again a few weeks later



## Experiment with food temperatures

- Some people find that cold or room temperature foods are more palatable than hot foods because hot foods produce stronger smells and flavors. Experiment with different temperatures to see what works best for you.



## Practice good oral hygiene

- Brush your teeth and tongue using a soft toothbrush twice a day
- Make sure to angle the bristles toward your gumline to clean between your gums and teeth
- Brush gently in small circular motions instead of scrubbing hard in back-and-forth motions
- Use a fluoride toothpaste
- Floss daily (*unless flossing causes bleeding when your platelet count is low - this can increase your risk of infection*)
- Rinse your mouth with a saltwater and baking soda mixture before and after eating or drinking
  - 1 cup (500 mL) warm water, 1 tsp baking soda, 1 tsp salt
- Avoid alcohol-containing mouthwashes



## If a metallic taste is a problem

### Avoid:

- Canned foods
- Red meats
- Coffee
- Dark chocolate
- Using metal utensils or straws
- Using metal pots and pans with enamel coating

### Try:

- Squeezing lemon or lime juice over your foods or a splash of vinegar
- Adding pickled vegetables to your meals
- Using plastic utensils or bamboo chopsticks
- Eating food cold or at room temperature
- Marinating meats or fish in acidic marinades
- Using glass cookware and food storage containers
- Eating popsicles, ice chips, or frozen fruit

## If you are experiencing strong odors

- Avoid food preparation areas
- Use exhaust fans and ceiling fans and/or open windows when preparing food
- Cover drinks with a lid and drink them from a straw
- Order take out
- Ask family, friends, neighbors, and other support networks to help prepare meals. Serve foods cold or at room temperature.
- Hot foods produce stronger odors and flavors

**Disclaimer:** Please note that the information provided herein is intended to serve as a general guideline and may not meet the unique nutritional needs of individual patients. The distribution of these materials is at the discretion of the physician. The creator does not hold responsibility for their application or outcomes on individual health conditions. All patients are advised to consult with their physician for personalized advice tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.