

Taste Changes and Treatment



Question:

Are there any foods that will help with taste changes caused by chemotherapy?

Answer:

Some chemotherapy medications can cause taste changes, making food unappealing. Use the following tips to keep your mouth clean and reduce the odd flavors your treatment may cause.

Clean your mouth frequently with a baking soda rinse. Add 1 teaspoon baking soda, and if desired, 1 teaspoon salt to one quart of room temperature water and mix well. Before eating, swish a small amount of this mixture in your mouth and spit out.

If you have a metallic taste in your mouth, use plastic utensils.

Add lemon or lime slices, or a few fresh berries to water to improve its taste.

Avoid food smells and being in the kitchen while food is prepared.

Breakfast foods may be better tolerated than other foods. Try scrambled eggs, hot and cold cereals, pancakes, waffles, and smoothies at any time of the day.

Cold foods will have fewer odors. Try deviled eggs, watermelon, frozen berries, yogurt and shakes.

Tart flavors, such as lemon and lime, and vinegars and pickled items, often taste better during treatment. These also improve the taste of other foods. Do not use these items if you have a sore mouth or throat; they may cause more irritation.

If foods taste overly sweet, add something sour or slightly bitter. For example, add frozen cranberries to a fruit smoothie, or decaffeinated powdered coffee to chocolate or vanilla liquid nutritional supplements.

You may develop new flavor preferences during treatment. Try herbs such as mint or tarragon, spices such as cumin, or condiments, including mustard, ketchup, or Italian salad dressing.

Marinate beef, pork or chicken in Teriyaki or sweet and sour sauce, or in dressings made with citrus juices or wine, to perk up their flavor.

Please discuss your individualized nutritional needs with the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist at your cancer treatment facility.

The original question and answer were generously donated by Diana Dyer, MS, RD a cancer survivor, registered dietitian, organic garlic farmer, and the author of "A Dietitian's Cancer Story: Information & Inspiration for Recovery & Healing from a 3-time Cancer Survivor."

Question and Answer updated by Daria Pori, on behalf of the ON DPG
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References, Websites, and Resources:

1. Elliott L, Levin R, McIver J. The Complete Resource Kit for Oncology Nutrition. Chicago, IL: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; 2013
2. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Nutrition Care Manual®