

Information Sheet: Cancer Treatment & Taste Changes

People with cancer often experience changes in their sense of taste.

Cancer itself and treatments can alter taste buds. Frequently, a change of taste is linked with chemotherapy or radiation and the change is usually short term.

A change in the way foods taste may cause you to dislike certain foods, which may lead to a lack of appetite or weight loss.

How can I manage my taste changes?

- ❖ You may find that red meat, such as beef or lamb, tastes metallic. Try soaking the meat in fruit juice, wine or a sweet and sour sauce before you cook it. Or try poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, dairy products or legumes such as baked beans and other high protein foods instead of red meat.
- ❖ Cold or frozen food may taste better than hot foods.
- ❖ Try using plastic utensils and glass cookware to lessen a metallic taste
- ❖ Use the kitchen fan when cooking if the smell affects your taste. Using the outside BBQ, covered pots or the microwave will also help you avoid unpleasant odours.
- ❖ Use more and/or stronger seasonings to bring out the flavour of foods. Herbs (such as mint, oregano and basil), garlic, curry powder, Worcester sauce and soy sauce are good for this. If you are feeling sick, this may not work for you.
- ❖ If tea and coffee taste unpleasant, choose drinks such as fruit juices, lemonade or tonic water instead.
- ❖ Use a straw to bypass tastebuds
- ❖ Don't force yourself to eat foods you don't enjoy. Eat whatever foods appeal to you.
- ❖ Chewing sugar-free gum may help reduce a metallic taste in the mouth and reduce dryness in the mouth.

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- ❖ Brush your teeth before and after meals to keep your mouth fresh.
- ❖ Avoid smoking. This can affect your sense of smell, thus changing the sense of taste.

Tell your Doctor or Nurse if:

Change in your taste is resulting in a lack of appetite leading to ongoing weight loss

We encourage you to speak with your healthcare team if you have any concerns about your taste changes during your treatment.

We welcome feedback at:

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Bairnsdale Regional Health Service is located on the traditional land of the Gunai Kurnai people.

My team is **BRHS**