

Taste and Smell

Eating Well in Spite of Changes

Maintaining good nutrition is important while you are receiving cancer treatment. Patients receiving chemotherapy or radiation sometimes report changes in taste and smell. Below are suggestions to help manage these side effects.

- Drink plenty of liquids. Water can be flavored using mint leaves, lemons, oranges, grapefruit or cucumbers or by adding a splash of 100% juice. Always wash fruits and vegetables well. Also try decaffeinated herbal teas (fruit, mint, ginger and green) or ginger ale. See the Infused Water recipe on page 2 for ideas.
- Practice good mouth care. Brush your teeth and tongue after every meal. Rinsing your mouth with a baking soda solution before eating may help. Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking sod in 4 ounces water or 1 teaspoon in a 16-ounce water bottle. Rinse your mouth several times a day with this solution. Make a new batch daily or try alcohol-free mouth wash.
- Eat sorbet (lemon or lime) or frozen fresh fruits (grapes, melon or oranges) to clear your taste buds. Try sugar free gum, peppermints and lemon drops.
- If you have a metallic taste in your mouth, use plastic utensils and avoid canned food. Sometimes avoiding foods cooked or stored in foil can help.
- Red meats often taste more metallic. Substitute chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, peanut butter, beans, soy milk, tofu and dairy products for red meats to get adequate protein in your diet.
- Marinate and cook meat in sweet juices, sauces, fruits, acidic dressings, or wines. Examples are barbeque beef, ham with pineapple, chicken with a honey glaze, or London broil in Italian dressing.
- Eat small frequent meals and snacks.
- Softer foods require less chewing and therefore, less tasting before swallowing.
- If foods taste salty or bitter, increase sweet tastes by adding honey, agave, maple syrup, and jam to foods.
- If foods taste too sweet, increase salty and tart flavors. Add lemon wedges, citrus fruits, vinegar, or pickled foods and salt to foods. (Avoid these if you have a sore mouth or throat.)
- Try foods and seasonings which are different from what you normally eat. Experiment with adding basil, oregano, mint, rosemary, tarragon, onion, garlic, barbeque sauce, chili powder, ketchup or mustard to make foods taste better. Look for recipes at www.aicr.org.
- Chilled or frozen foods may taste better than warm or hot foods. Try deviled eggs, egg salad, melon, frozen berries, yogurt and shakes.
- To decrease the smell of foods, eat foods cold or at room temperature. For soups or

beverages, try using a cup with a cover and sip through a straw. Avoid being in the same room where the food is being cooked. Eat in well-ventilated areas or outside to avoid strong smells.

Recipe: Infused Water

Ingredients

Fruit: strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, pineapple, mango, lemon, lime, grapefruit, orange, watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew, pear, apple, grapes, plum, peach, kiwi

Vegetables: cucumber, carrot, celery

Herbs/spices: ginger, cinnamon, sage, rosemary, basil, cilantro, mint leaves

Combination Suggestions

- Grapefruit, cucumber, rosemary
- Raspberry, lime
- Pineapple, mint
- Lemon, ginger (can be helpful for nausea)
- Cucumber, watermelon, mint
- Blueberry, mint, lemon
- Pineapple, mango
- Strawberry, cantaloupe
- Strawberry, kiwi
- Cucumber, mint

Directions

1. Select a container. You may use any glass, BPA-free plastic container, Mason jar, pitcher or water bottle. You can make a large pitcher to drink throughout the day or one glass at a time.
2. Pick any flavor combination of fruit and vegetables that appeals to you. Wash produce well prior to using. If you have mouth sores, avoid acidic flavors. Add the fruit and vegetables to the container.
3. Smash the fruit, vegetables, herbs and spices with a wooden spoon to release their flavors and essential oils.
4. Add plain or sparkling water.

If you have any questions about your diet, talk with your registered dietitian at the Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center.

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