

South Warwickshire



NHS Foundation Trust

Warwickshire Dietetic Service

Advice to help with loss of taste

If you have had an illness that affects your sense of taste such as COVID 19, you may have decreased the amount you eat and drink. If you have, your body will need more protein and calories than usual. If you have lost weight or muscle, you will need to eat more to recover more quickly and to ensure you stay healthy.

This leaflet contains tips on how you can improve the taste of food and drink.

Advice to help with loss of taste

Taste is the ability to detect the flavour of food and drinks. Our sense of how a food tastes is also linked to smell.

A loss of taste can be caused by viruses such as COVID-19 resulting in a sudden dislike for certain foods, or eating and drinking becoming unpleasant. This may result in weight loss, reduced appetite and affect your feeling of well being. Losing all sense of taste is usually just temporary.

Remember to keep your mouth and teeth clean and follow recommended mouth care routines.

Try the following suggestions:

- Rinse your mouth with water before eating.
- Allow hot food and drink to cool a little. You may find that you can taste cold food better if you allow it to come to room temperature.
- Avoid any unpleasant tasting foods. Do however retry them a couple of weeks later, as your taste may have returned.
- If you experience a metallic taste while eating, try using plastic utensils.
- Try sucking lemon drops, mints or chewing gum if you have a bitter or metallic taste.

Add salty, sweet, bitter and sour ingredients to stimulate your taste buds:

- Try foods that you would not normally eat and new combinations of flavours
- Use herbs and spices to add flavour during cooking. The table on the next page gives lots of suggestions.
- Try marinating meat in fruit juice, wine, cider or lemon juice.
- Meat dishes with sauces such as sweet and sour, gravy, curry, or condensed soups may be better tolerated. Pickles and chutneys may improve cold meats and fish.
- Try sharp tasting foods and drinks, such as citrus fruits, juices, sorbet, jelly, lemon mousse, fruit yoghurt, boiled sweets, mints, lemonade, Marmite, Bovril, or aniseed.
- Excessive sweetness can be relieved by diluting drinks with tonic or soda water.
- Adding ginger, nutmeg or cinnamon to puddings may be helpful.

It is difficult to eat when you cannot taste the food, but it is important that you continue to eat and drink regularly. You may need to eat and drink at set times rather than when you feel hungry.

Food safety

Check the use by dates on food and drink and do not use any items that are out of date. Manufacturers often recommend that opened food is used within a certain number of days or weeks so it may help to label packets and jars with the date you opened them.

You can find more information about loss of taste at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/lost-or-changed-sense-smell/>
<https://abscent.org/>

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Suggestions for flavouring foods	
Pepper or peppercorns	Sprinkle, crush or grind over any savoury dishes.
Vinegar	Try different types such as balsamic, cider, red or white wine vinegar. Good with chips, fish or mix with mustard and olive oil to make salad dressing.
Garlic	Use fresh cloves or salt-free garlic purée in meat, chicken, vegetarian or pasta dishes.
Mixed herbs, oregano or basil	Use fresh, dried or frozen in meat, chicken, fish, bean, soups or pasta dishes.
Mint or chives	Serve with potatoes or vegetables.
Parsley	Use fresh or dried, add to fish.
Rosemary	Add to garlic bread, chicken, lamb or pork before roasting.
Bay leaf or bouquet garni	Use in stews, casseroles and soups.
Lemon or lime juice	Squeeze over paneer, fish and chicken dishes.
Ginger or lemon grass	Chop finely and add to stir fries, Chinese dishes or curry.
Chillies, chilli powder or crushed chillies	Use to make chilli con carne, dahl, spicy pasta dishes or in curries.
Curry powder, turmeric, cumin, coriander, garam masala, paprika, cardamom	Use to produce a variety of flavours in any spicy dish.
Mint sauce or mint jelly	Serve with lamb dishes, vegetables or potatoes.
Horse radish sauce	Serve with beef or mix in to mash potato.
Cranberry or apple sauce	Serve with poultry. Try sweet sauces like these with red meats too.
Mustard	Serve with pork or beef. Try French, English or wholegrain varieties. Try adding to mash potato with caramelised onions.
Soy sauce	Add to vegetables. Try mixing with honey and oil and use as a marinade.
Worcestershire sauce	Add to soups, casseroles, melted cheese or vegetables.
Flavoured oils	Mix into mash potato or use as a dressing.
Pesto	Add to pasta, mash potato or mix with vegetables.
Cloves, cinnamon, vanilla essence or nutmeg	Add to desserts such as rice pudding, stewed fruit, custard.
Alcohol such as wine or beer or liqueurs	Add to savoury stews or poached fruit.

Equality Statement

At South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust we are fully committed to equality and diversity, both as an employer and as a service provider. We have a policy statement in our Equality Strategy that clearly outlines our commitment to equality for service users, patients and staff:

You and your family have the right to be treated fairly and be routinely involved in decisions about your treatment and care. You can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. You will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

You have a responsibility to treat other service users, patients and our staff with dignity and respect.

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print.

PALS

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services. You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600 054 by email: Pals@swft.nhs.uk or by calling in person to the PALS Office which is located in the Lakin Road Entrance to the hospital.

If you have any queries about your diet, please contact us on 01926 600818, selecting option 3

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Contact no	01926 600818
Published	April 2020
Review	April 2025
Version no	1
SWH No	SWH 01072



Approved by
SWFT Patient
Information
Group