



TORRANCE  
MEMORIAL



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# Taste and Smell Changes

Cancer and cancer treatment can cause changes in your sense of taste and smell. How foods taste and smell can change from day to day, and these changes may affect your appetite. To find foods that are appealing, try experimenting with new foods or cuisines, marinades, spices and ways of preparing what you eat. Good oral care is also generally helpful.

## Oral care tips



To keep your mouth clean and healthy, rinse and brush your teeth after meals and before bed (or every four hours during the day).



Before eating, rinse your mouth with a solution of 1 quart of water, 3/4 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of baking soda. This rinse can help keep your mouth clean and improve your sense of taste.



Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol, which can irritate a sore mouth.

# Relief for Taste and Smell Problems



## Loss of taste

- Choose foods with tart flavors, such as lemon wedges, lemonade, citrus fruits, vinegar and pickled foods. (Caution: avoid these acidic foods if you have a sore mouth or throat.)
- Blend fresh fruits into shakes, ice cream or yogurt.
- Eat frozen fruits, such as whole grapes and mandarin orange slices or chopped cantaloupe and watermelon.
- Select fresh vegetables. They may be more appealing than canned or frozen ones.



## Salty, bitter, acidic or metallic tastes

- Add sweeteners or a little bit of sugar to foods. A little sweetness can help to increase pleasant tastes.
- Season foods with herbs, spices and other seasonings, such as onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup or mint.
- Use plastic utensils or chopsticks if metal forks and spoons taste unpleasant.
- Add lemon juice or other flavorings to water.
- Suck on sugar-free lemon drops, gum or mints.



## Meats taste strange

- Choose other protein-rich foods (such as poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, tofu and soy milk) instead of meat.
- Marinate and cook meats in sweet juices, fruits, acidic dressings or wine. For example, try sweet-and-sour pork with pineapple, chicken with honey glaze, or London broil in Italian dressing.



## Foods or drinks smell unpleasant

- Choose foods that do not need to be cooked, such as cold sandwiches, crackers and cheese, yogurt and fruit, or cold cereal and milk.
- Serve foods cold or at room temperature. Foods served hot often have stronger odors and flavors.
- Keep away from the kitchen during meal cooking time to avoid food smells.
- Eat in cool, well-ventilated rooms that don't have any food or cooking odors.
- For protein drinks and other beverages, use a cover on the cup and drink with a straw.



**For more information, call  
310-891-6707 or visit  
[TorranceMemorial.org/nutrition](https://www.torrancememorial.org/nutrition).**

2841 Lomita Boulevard  
Torrance, CA 90505