

Help for Dysguesia

When foods don't taste right, it's very common for calorie intake to decrease, many times, significantly, leading to weight loss and malnutrition. In many cases, the most severe dysguesia may occur during the course of radiation treatment or post-operatively, when nutrition is critical to proper healing and recovery. Here are some ways to help cope with dysguesia in an effort to maintain proper nutrition and hydration.

- Room temperature or even slightly chilled foods may taste better than hot foods, especially during radiation treatment.
- Rinse your mouth with salted water before eating, as this will clear residue from the taste buds, which may otherwise contribute to an altered sense of taste.
- Avoid using metal dishes and utensils as these can make a metallic taste in the mouth even worse. Try using plastic utensils instead.
- Cooking with metal utensils and cookware can contribute to a metallic taste. Try using oven/stove safe glass cookware and plastic or wooden utensils when cooking.
- Avoid storing foods in aluminum foil as this can contribute to a metallic taste. Store foods in plastic ware. Using plastic wrap and wax paper is also good in this case.
- Never force yourself to eat anything that tastes very bad. Look for alternatives that are not as offensive to your sense of taste.
- Meats can often taste very bad, especially during radiation. Fish and eggs are excellent alternatives that usually are better tasting, especially during radiation.
- Milk and other dairy products are often well tolerated: ***These will NOT make your mucous production worse but they may coat any existing mucous. Clear/rinse as much of the mucous as possible before taking dairy products.***
- Pasta is usually very well tolerated.
- Vegetables usually taste good, especially during radiation. Avoid tomatoes.
- Salt can help foods taste better, but it is important to follow your doctor's guidelines regarding a healthy amount of salt intake.
- Rinse your mouth or suck on a hard candy to clear a bad taste. Lingering bad tastes can impact the tastes of other foods you may be eating.

Although all foods/liquids may taste different from normal, it is important to find nutritious foods/drinks that you can tolerate well. It is very important that good nutrition be maintained at all times. Also, continuing to eat by mouth as much as possible can help to preserve your ability to swallow. If you are having difficulty finding foods that taste ok, your doctor/SLP staff can guide you further in this regard.