

Taste Disorders

Taste buds on the tongue detect different tastes (e.g., salty, sweet, bitter, savoury and sour).

Changes in oral health can negatively affect the ability to eat and taste food.

Risk Factors:

- Dry mouth (less saliva)
- Smoking
- Medications
- Periodontitis (gum disease)
- Some health conditions and infections (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, common cold)
- Dental work



Most Common Signs & Symptoms:

- Metallic, bitter, or salty tastes
- Changes in how flavours taste
- Trouble telling flavours apart

Seek Care If You Experience:

- Trouble eating enough food
- Symptoms lasting more than 2–4 weeks
- No improvement with good, daily oral hygiene (practice of keeping the mouth healthy, e.g., brushing teeth)
- A burning feeling in the mouth

Ways to Help:

- Eat foods with stronger flavours
- Use artificial saliva substitutes (products that help with dry mouth) before eating
- Add gravy and light cream sauces to foods to give it more taste
- If cancer treatment is affecting taste, ask for help from your care team
- Practice good daily oral hygiene by brushing teeth, cleaning dentures, cleaning between the teeth, and having regular dental checkups

Halitosis (**bad breath**) from poor oral hygiene can affect taste.

Swallowing can also be affected by taste. For example, salty and sweet foods have been found to help with swallowing compared to foods with less taste.

