Taste Changes

Changes to your sense of taste or smell may result from disease, injury, chemotherapy or radiation treatment to the head or neck.

- Some common complaints are - ‘food has no taste’, ‘food tastes like cardboard’ or ‘food has a metallic taste’. You may find you no longer like the taste of your favourite foods.
- Your doctor can advise you how long your taste is likely to be affected.
- While food may taste bland it will still provide nourishment.
- It is important to keep up with your food intake and you may require to force yourself to eat

It is important to keep your mouth and teeth clean. The nurse will be able to recommend suitable mouthwashes.

To improve the taste of food, you may find these suggestions helpful:

- Add small amounts of seasonings, such as basil, oregano and rosemary.
- Try including food with lots of flavour such as bacon, cheese, onion, garlic, chutneys, sauces or pickles.
- Tart foods such as lemon or oranges may add flavour.
- Add sugar or honey if food tastes salty or acidic.
- Add salt, lemon juice, vinegar or instant coffee if food tastes too sweet.
- Improve the taste of meat, chicken or fish by marinating it in sauces or dressings such as fruit juices, asian-style sauces, honey or wine.
- Use high protein foods such as fish, poultry, eggs or dairy foods if red meats taste unpleasant
- Vary the colour, texture and temperature of foods e.g. add crunchy croutons to soup or chop celery or onion through mashed potato.
- Use a straw to bypass the tastebuds. Stop if it makes swallowing more difficult or makes you cough.
- Experiment with different foods. If you normally eat mild cheddar cheese, try a stronger mature cheese for extra flavour.

If you also have a sore mouth, sore gums or sore throat, talk to your Doctor or Dietitian, as some of the ideas may not be suitable.