

Managing the effects of on the body

Taste and smell

Taste and smell changes

You may find your favourite foods taste and smell differently following your COVID illness.

What does this mean for me?

Food may taste bland, salty, sweet or metallic.

These changes are usually short-term but can affect your appetite and how much you eat.

How can I improve the taste of food?

- It is important to choose foods that appeal to you to ensure you eat well, but continue to retry foods as your taste preferences may change.
- Keeping your mouth clean and healthy by brushing your teeth morning and evening and rinsing your mouth with water if it feels dry or uncomfortable. Avoid alcohol based mouthwashes.
- If you find cooking smells are affecting your appetite, microwave ready meals or cold food can be a short-term alternative.
- Unless you have been given specific recommendations from a Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) regarding your swallowing, try experimenting with different flavours, textures and temperatures of food to see which you find more edible. You may find bland flavours such as plain chicken, fish, tofu and rice may be easier to eat especially if you are still feeling nauseated or have an unsettled stomach. Cold or room temperature foods may also be more acceptable.
- A good protein intake is important for your recovery however, high protein foods can take on a bitter or metallic taste. Try marinating meats with sweet/sour marinades to change the flavour and try a variety of protein sources to find the most enjoyable one for you; red meat, poultry, fish, egg, cheese, vegetarian meat alternatives, beans and pulses.
- Adding strong flavours to food can help with taste e.g. herbs and sauces such as apple sauce, mint sauce, cranberry sauce, horseradish, mustard and pickles. Spices can also improve flavour.

- Sharp/tart flavoured foods and drinks such orange, lemon, lime flavours can be useful in balancing very sweet tastes. Sucking boiled sweets and mints may also help refresh your mouth before and after eating.
- If foods have a metallic taste, try plastic cutlery instead of metal and use glass cookware.
- Salty or bitter taste changes may be improved by choosing low salt varieties and adding sweet flavours to food or drink, such as sweetener, honey, or sugar.
- If you are struggling to maintain your weight do follow the eating well advice here: www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/your-wellbeing/eating-well/