Managing Taste Changes in Kidney Disease

BCRenal
Provincial Health Services Authority

Taste changes are common in people with kidney disease. This can have a huge impact on your interest in food and quality of life.



Changes in your taste can happen if your mouth is dry, which is common when you are on a fluid restriction or taking certain medications. The make-up of your saliva can change as well due to a build up of waste products (uremia), which can affect how food tastes.

You may notice food has a metallic or bitter taste or that it doesn't taste like much at all.

Taste changes could also be from thrush, dental problems, reflux/heartburn, tobacco use, natural aging, minor infections, and other conditions.

General Tips:



Brush your teeth and tongue regularly



Floss your teeth regularly



Keep dentures and gums clean



Use baking soda mouthwash

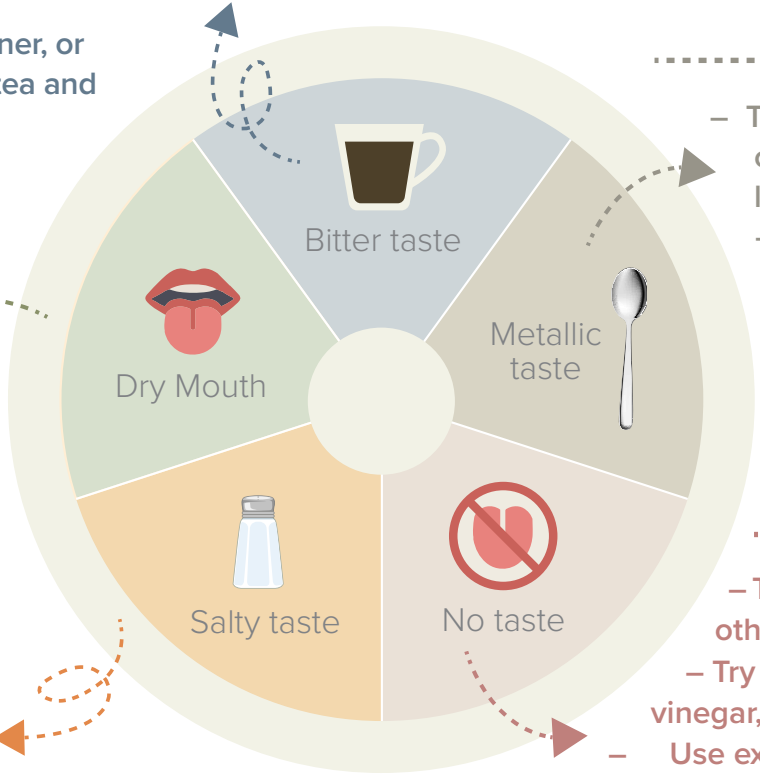
Baking Soda Mouthwash (rinse and spit)

- Mix **1 teaspoon baking soda** (buy from any grocery store) into a container with **500ml water**.
- Rinse your mouth with this solution regularly throughout the day and before meals.
- Do not swallow.
- Make a new batch each day.

Tips to Improve Taste

Bitter Taste

- Limit bitter foods like red meat, chocolate, coffee, tea, beer, and tonic water.
- Choose carbonated drinks or add a squeeze of lemon or lime to water.
- Use lemon, lime, or vinegar in cooking, marinades, or on foods just before eating.
- Add sugar, sugar-free sweetener, or spices like cinnamon to your tea and coffee.
- Eat food and drinks cold because they have less of a bitter taste.
- Before eating, drink a small glass of sparking water to cleanse your mouth.
- Do not add salt.
- Add extra flavour to foods using herbs and spices, pepper, vinegars, or lemon juice.



Metallic Taste

- Try chewing gum, or sucking on hard candies like mint, lemon, orange, or sour lollipops.
- Drink gingerale or soda water.
- Drink fruit juice or tea.
- Use non-metal utensils and water bottles (wooden, plastic, or glass).
- Use glass cookware instead of metal or cast iron pots and pans.

Dry Mouth

- Suck on hard candies like peppermint or chew gum to increase saliva in your mouth.
- Suck on ice or frozen fruit.
- Ask your pharmacist about using artificial saliva.

No Taste

- Try any of the recommendations in the other categories.
- Try marinating meats/tofu/beans, lemon juice, vinegar, and other low-sodium sauces.
- Use extra spices instead of salt.
- A zinc deficiency can cause you to lose taste for all foods. This is more common in people with kidney disease, especially if you aren't eating enough protein. If you notice your food has no taste, talk to your doctor or dietitian about taking a zinc supplement.

Salty Taste

- Avoid salty foods.
- Eat sweeter foods to balance salty taste.
- Use honey, maple syrup, fruit juices, tomato, and beets in cooking.

* *Adapted from CKD test plate, St. George Hospital Renal Supportive Care*