



## Nutrition and Dietetics Department

# Managing Taste Changes in Kidney Disease

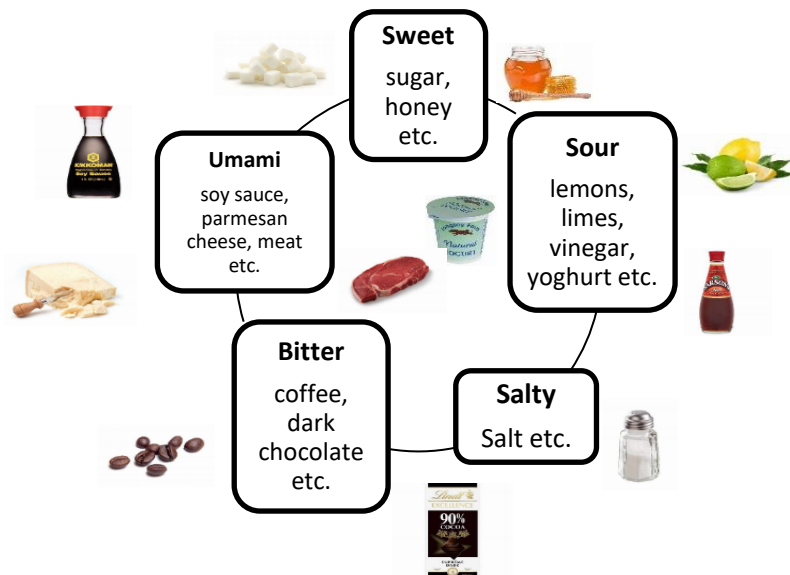
Taste changes are common in kidney disease. This is due to the build-up of toxins in your body. Common complaints include:

- Metallic taste
- Bitter taste
- Salty taste
- No taste
- Dry mouth.

There are some things you can do to help manage these changes.

### How do we taste?

You have thousands of taste buds on your tongue, on the inside of your cheek and on the roof and back of your mouth. The smell of food also influences taste. There are 5 basic tastes: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, umami (savoury).



If you have taste changes, stimulating some of the other tastes can help reduce the problem but continue to avoid salt and salty foods as these can affect your blood pressure.

### Managing taste changes

Regularly rinsing your mouth out through the day and before meals with a sodium bicarbonate mouthwash regularly can help reduce problems with taste:

You can use this mouthwash to rinse your mouth regularly throughout the day.  
**1 teaspoon sodium bicarbonate (available from any supermarket)  
mixed into 500 ml water.** (Do not drink the mouthwash.)

Some useful tips on overcoming the taste changes include:

<b>Metallic taste</b>	<p>Before a meal/snack, try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using minty foods eg chewing gum/mints.</li> <li>• Have a small glass of ginger beer/ale or fizzy water.</li> </ul> <p>Avoid metal cutlery and canned foods.</p>
<b>Bitter taste</b>	<p><i>Adding acidity or a sweet flavour to your foods and drinks can help to counteract the bitter taste.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid bitter foods and drinks eg red meat, chocolate, tea/coffee or alcohol.</li> <li>• Consume more acidic foods and drinks eg marinate foods in lemon/lime or add a honey glaze. Try using a vinegar-based dressing/sauce.</li> <li>• Eat naturally sweet foods such as tomatoes or beetroot. Add sugar to your tea/coffee but not if you are diabetic.</li> <li>• Before eating try having a small glass of fizzy water.</li> <li>• Cold foods will leave less of a bitter taste eg sandwiches, or allow meats to cool before eating.</li> </ul>
<b>Salty taste</b>	<p><i>Sweet tasting foods may help to counteract the salty taste.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the amount of salt and salty foods in your diet.</li> <li>• Use sweet flavours eg add a honey glaze to your meats/vegetables, or include naturally sweet foods.</li> </ul>
<b>No taste</b>	<p><i>Add extra flavours to your food:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try using pepper, herbs, spices, vinegars or chilli.</li> <li>• Marinate meats and fish in vinegar, or lemon juice-based dressings, or add herbs or spices to them.</li> <li>• Add dressings and sauces that are lemon or vinegar based.</li> <li>• A zinc supplement may be useful if you have completely lost all taste.</li> </ul>
<b>Dry mouth</b>	<p><i>Ensure that you have a good mouthcare routine and are regularly brushing your teeth each day.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid salty foods, as these will increase thirst.</li> <li>• To stimulate more saliva try sucking hard sweets or frozen fruit segments.</li> <li>• You could try an artificial saliva, available from the chemist.</li> </ul>

**About this leaflet:**

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If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email [pals@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@dchft.nhs.uk)



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