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Cancer treatment can affect your food preferences

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TUESDAY, Sept. 19, 2017 (HealthDay News) – Cancer therapies often change patients' sense of taste, which may affect what they like to eat, according to a nutrition expert.

"Increased taste sensitivities are more common than a muting of taste," said Catherine Carpenter, professor of clinical nutrition at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine.

"Usually, the type of taste sensitivity encountered is one of a metallic nature."

Changes in tastes often influence a person's food preferences, but treatment may affect individuals differently, Carpenter noted in a university news release. "If anything, patients tend to prefer bland foods rather than spicy foods," she said. "It's important to remember that preferences may vary depending on the cancer and type of treatment. You cannot lump all cancer patients into one dietary regimen."

After treatments, such as chemo or radiation therapy, a nutritionist can help patients develop a diet tailored to their specific needs and preferences, Carpenter suggested.

"Patients must be interviewed, and then depending on the cancer and type of treatment, a plan can be developed to enhance recovery that is compatible with their taste and smell sensitivities," she said.

It's important, however, for patients to learn about possible side effects of treatment so they understand why their tastes may change, Carpenter advised. "If patients understand the changes in taste they experience is due to their treatment, they can be guided toward healthy food choices that their new taste preferences can accommodate," she said.

More information
The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about the side effects of cancer treatment.

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