

a series of fact sheets written
by experts in the field of liver
disease

Side Effect Management: Taste Changes

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TASTE CHANGES ARE A TEMPORARY SIDE EFFECT of HCV medications. Patients usually describe this as having a metallic taste in the mouth. The medical terms for taste changes are aliageusia, hypogeusia, dysgeusia, parageusia or phantogeusia. Other medical problems, such as a zinc or vitamin B12 deficiency can cause taste disorders. Report taste changes to your medical provider and dentist so they can rule out other causes. The sense of taste returns 2 to 12 weeks after stopping HCV medications.

Here are some tips for managing taste changes:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat with plastic, wooden, or porcelain utensils.
- Use non-metallic cookware, such as glass.
- Add tart flavorings such as vinegar, lemon, lime, or orange juice to your food.
- Choose cold foods rather than hot ones.
- Experiment with aromatic herbs and spices.
- Select foods with a variety of textures and shapes.
- Try foods that are high in protein, such as eggs, tofu, chicken, fish or nuts.
- Sample various dairy products, such as cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese or ice cream.
- Sorbet, sherberts, frozen fruit bars, and smoothies may taste better to you.

- Flavor your food with horseradish or mustard.
- Avoid canned food, especially those with low or no sodium (unless you are on a sodium-restricted diet).
- If a food does not taste good to you, take a break from it for a while.
- Try a new food or one that you did not like in the past. You may find that you enjoy it while you are going through HCV treatment.
- Before eating, rinse your mouth with club soda, warm salt water, or a mouthwash of ½ teaspoon of salt, ½ teaspoon of baking soda and 1 cup of warm water.
- Do not eat or drink flavored foods, especially citrus, immediately before or after you brush your teeth.
- Take good care of your teeth. Brush, floss, and have regular dental check-ups.
- Ask your medical provider if zinc sulfate would be worth a try. A typical dose is 220 mg twice daily.
- Remember, your sense of taste will return after you have completed treatment.

For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit www.hcvadvocate.org.

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A publication of the Hepatitis C Support Project

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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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