

Smell and taste changes in children with cancer: no one-size-fits-all solution

Children treated for cancer often experience side effects such as nausea, vomiting and mucositis. These affect food intake and increase the risk of malnutrition. Poor nutritional status can lead to increased infections, decreased survival and poorer quality of life in children with cancer. Therefore, it is important for a child with cancer to be and remain well-nourished during treatment. Changes in smell and taste caused by chemotherapy can also affect nutritional intake. The chemical senses, smell and taste, play an important role in stimulating appetite and the sense of taste in deciding whether or not to eat. According to *Mirjam van den Brink* (Maastricht University and Princess Máxima Center, the Netherlands), up to 60% of children treated for cancer suffered from taste changes during treatment, citing it as one of the most bothersome symptoms: 'Coke tastes like vomit'. Sometimes smells and tastes are perceived better or worse, sometimes they are completely different than before. Healthcare professionals need to be better informed about the occurrence and consequences of changes in smell and taste, says Mirjam. Individual (nutritional) advice can then be a good approach to deal with changes in smell and taste.

