



Understanding our senses

Gustatory (taste)

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"I can't bear stringy food, slimy food, gloopy food, food with bits in (many textures make me gag)."

Anon

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Understanding sensory based food choices

Because eating is a multi-sensory activity we need to recognise food choices relating to other senses too.

Eating dry crunchy foods may be to provide more sound input - our jaw is next to our ear so when we eat crunchy foods we are aware of more of a sound that's being created.

Someone may eat soft beige foods for consistency of texture and colour.

It might be a particular taste - salty foods - halloumi, olives, cured meats etc are a great way to sense salty foods.

Eating meat and chewy foods or people who stuff food in their mouths can often link with their proprioceptive (body awareness) input.

We need the saliva in our mouths to help us to detect the taste of food.

There were theories in the past that suggested we detected taste directly from our tongue. We now know that the tongue detects the food and molecules but it is our brain that tells us which taste we are sensing.

The 5 tastes that we sense are Bitter, Salty, Sour, Sweet & Umami (savoury).

Misunderstanding of taste

When talking about food we commonly associate it with the flavour of food. Our sense of taste is actually a lot more subtle than we realise.

Eating is a multi-sensory activity which means that many of our senses are used in order for us to help understand the food we are eating.

I mentioned on the touch course that we have the most amount of tactile receptors in our mouths. Food can therefore be responded to regarding its texture.

The true flavour of food however is determined by our sense of smell that works alongside our sense of taste. If you know anyone who has lost their sense of smell you will know that they may eat certain foods or their food choices are now very different to what they used to be before losing their sense of smell.

Food choices now may be foods with really strong tastes - hot curries, bitter foods, sour foods - this can be to try and compensate for the flavour which they are now not processing.

In a similar way if you think about when you have a cold - you might not really be able to taste the flavour of the food properly so you may lose your appetite or try and eat strong foods.

This information is based on our online training 'Understanding our senses' you can find these online via our website shop.

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