Find eating healthy a challenge? Understanding your taste preference may help. Take our quiz to see if you prefer sweet, fatty or salty and find out how you can make healthy swaps.
Why do taste preferences matter?

We’ve all heard people say “I have a sweet tooth” or “I crave salty food” – and we now know there are both genetic and environmental factors driving these preferences. Taste preferences vary between people and are a main driver of food choice.

Finding out which of the three different tastes – sweet, salty or fatty - influences what you eat, can help you make healthy choices by satisfying your ‘inbuilt’ taste preference.

Taste is a key driver of food choice

Australian researchers are discovering why some people love sweet and others salty or enjoy a creamy fatty mouthfeel. A ‘wiring’ for certain tastes is a combination of nature and nurture. It’s natural to prefer energy-dense foods as this was an evolutionary advantage in times when food was lacking, however our preferences are also learned through our experiences with certain foods, for example being rewarded with sweet food for good behaviour.

Healthy diets are tasty

Many people think eating healthy means eating bland, low flavour foods that take away the enjoyment of eating. The good news from Australian research is flavour intensity increases as food choices become more healthy.

The researchers found healthy diets have higher sweetness and bitterness scores, with a large proportion of sweetness derived from core healthy foods like fruit.

Of the three taste preferences, fatty mouthfeel was found to be the strongest predictor of energy (kilojoule) intake.

The research shows that healthy foods can satisfy our taste preferences with less energy (kilojoules) compared to treat foods. For example:

- Fruit provides the highest sweetness for the lowest amount of energy
- Vegetables provide the highest saltiness for the lowest amount of energy
- Dairy foods provided the highest fatty mouthfeel for the lowest amount of energy.

We need to work with our taste preferences, not against them, to achieve a healthy diet

References:
Do you prefer sweet, fatty or salty?

Take our quiz by answering the questions below based on your initial feelings – there are no right or wrong answers. Don’t worry about whether you would consume it for health reasons, as we are thinking about liking for specific tastes only.

**STEP 1. For questions 1 to 9, answer: How much do you like the following foods?**
Mark the circle that best suits how you feel with a score of 1-5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Ham</th>
<th>I don’t like it at all</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>I like it a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Soy sauce</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Smoked salmon</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Dried fruit (e.g. sultanas, raisins)</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>Lollies</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>Roasted peanuts (unsalted)</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>Chicken drumstick with skin</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>Lamb chop (untrimmed)</td>
<td>I don’t like it at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I like it a lot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2. For questions 10 to 18, answer: How would you prefer to eat the following foods?**
Mark the circle that best suits your initial feeling with a score of 1-5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10</th>
<th>Hot chips</th>
<th>Without salt</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Very salty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>Steak</td>
<td>Without salt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very salty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>Green beans</td>
<td>Without salt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very salty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>Yoghurt</td>
<td>Not sweet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>No jam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lots of jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>Tea or coffee</td>
<td>Not sweet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very sweet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>Mashed potatoes</td>
<td>Without butter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very buttery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>Without oil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very oily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>Soup</td>
<td>Without cream</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very creamy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 3. Add up your scores for the different taste sensations.**
Your highest score indicates the type of taste (salty, fatty or sweet) that you most prefer.

For salty taste, add points for all GREEN questions.
My salty taste score = .........................

For sweet taste, add points for all BLUE questions.
My fatty taste score = .........................

For fatty taste, add points for all ORANGE questions.
My sweet taste score = .........................

You can make healthy swaps and still satisfy your taste preference. Read on for examples of how to do this.
Salty Swaps

**BREAKFAST**
- Bacon and egg roll
- Smoked salmon, baby spinach and cream cheese bagel
- Toast with vegemite
- Wholemeal toast with peanut butter

**SNACKING**
- French onion dip
- Hummus dip
- Salty crackers
- Wholegrain crackers
- Cabanossi Sausages
- Handful of olives
- Chips or crisps
- Handful of salted mixed nuts

**MAIN MEALS**
- Sausage roll
- Sushi rolls with soy sauce
- Beef burger with the lot
- Steak sandwich with salad and a drizzle of gravy
# Sweet Swaps

## Breakfast
- **High-sugar breakfast cereal**
- **Wholegrain breakfast cereal with dried fruit (e.g. muesli)**
- **Slice of banana bread**
- **Slice of raisin toast**

## Snacking
- **Confectionary**
- **Fresh dates**
- **Sweet biscuits**
- **Fresh fruit**

## Dessert
- **Slice of apple pie**
- **Baked or stewed apple**
- **Ice cream**
- **Fruit-flavoured yoghurt**

## Drinks
- **Can of soft drink**
- **Cup of flavoured milk**
- **Glass of cordial**
- **Glass of soda water with lemon or lime**
Fatty Swaps

**BREAKFAST**
- Ham and cheese croissant
- Chicken and avocado toastie
- Buttered toast
- Avocado on wholemeal toast

**SNACKING**
- Plain biscuits
- Handful of mixed nuts
- Chocolate bar
- Bliss ball made with dried fruit and nuts
- Chips or crisps
- Wholegrain crackers with ricotta cheese
- Ice cream
- Greek yoghurt

**MAIN MEALS**
- Pasta with creamy sauce
- Pasta with tomato-based sauce stirred with ricotta
- Butter chicken
- Chicken with yoghurt dressing

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1. This questionnaire has been adapted by the SNRC from the research paper Deglaire A et al (2012). Development of a questionnaire to assay recalled liking for salt, sweet and fat. Food Quality and Preference, 23, 110–124.

This resource was developed by the Sugar Nutrition Resource Centre (SNRC), a scientific information service which provides evidence-based information on the role of sugars in nutrition and health. For further information: www.sugarnutritionresource.org