

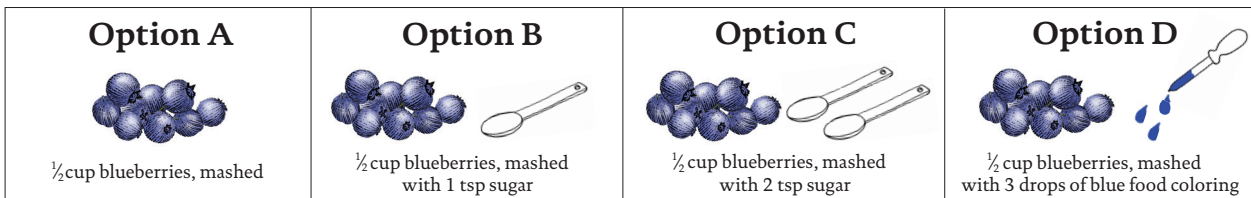
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Sweet Expectations

An Experiment for Your Patients and Clients

As health professionals, you know that humans are hardwired to enjoy sweet tastes. There are sweet taste receptors in our taste buds, and when sugar or sweeteners interact with the receptors, this sends signals to the brain which then sends signals to the central nervous system to respond favorably. Of course, this is an oversimplified description of a complicated chemical reaction in the body, but helps begin to explain the science of sweet.

But how sweet is sweet enough to satisfy taste buds? While taste is subjective and very individual, think about what would happen if you conducted this taste test with your patients and clients.



Ask:

Which option represents what they think blueberries should taste like?
Which option do they prefer?

If they answer B or C, this indicates that their palate may be distorted. They may be choosing foods with levels of sugar, natural sweeteners, and artificial sweeteners that impact their taste expectations. If they choose Option D, their visual cues may be influenced by their food environment if they are typically choosing items with food colorings. Understanding their current palate for sweet and visual expectations is important for you to understand while you work with them to reach their health goals. Helping them reset their palate will not only begin to adjust the level of sweetness they expect, but ultimately will help them begin to make healthier choices and adopt healthier eating habits that last a lifetime.

Here are 6 ways to help your patients & clients begin to reset their palate

- Focus on food label education and help them understand the levels of sugar in their food choices and also what ingredients - natural and artificial - are contributing to the sweet taste and what ingredients are enhancing the color from its natural state.
- Teach them to compare labels of similar foods so that they recognize how different the same types of food made by different brands can be.
- Highlight the difference between flavor and flavoring and how to distinguish between the two when making food choices.
- Encourage them to make eating a mindful activity, paying attention to the color, texture, flavor, and mouth-feel of every bite.
- Remind them that some foods are meant to taste really sweet, but those are not foods that should make up everyday meals and snacks. Blueberries are a snack but blueberry pie is dessert.
- Help them identify sources of added sweetness in their diets and create a plan for how to slowly wean those ingredients out. If removed slowly, the palate will adjust accordingly over time.

Once the palate is reset, they will begin to seek out real, delicious food made with simple ingredients and not a lot of sugar.