

Practical: Can You Taste Without Your Nose?

Resources:

- Small pieces of apple
- Small pieces of raw potato
- Bowl
- Blindfold

Activity:

Note: It is a good idea to have a drink of water in between samples to remove any lingering flavours.

The children may have experienced times when they have lost their sense of taste, for example when they have a cold. This activity encourages them to investigate how the senses of taste and smell are interrelated.

1. Prepare small pieces of apple and potato in advance of the lesson and place in separate bowls.
2. Tell the children you need a volunteer to carry out the taste test.
3. Place the blindfold on the volunteer child and ask them to hold their nose.
4. Ask the child to pick up a piece of food from one bowl and eat it, then eat a piece from the other bowl.
5. Ask the child if they can identify which was the apple and which was the potato.

Optional Extra

This test could also be done with different flavours of yoghurt.

Explaining the Science

The sense of taste is more complex than simply a message from nerves on the tongue. Foods stimulate the nerves in the nose as well as the mouth, both of which transmit their messages to the brain. Both these senses are used to identify a food type. Without the information from the nose, the brain is less able to distinguish between the similarly textured foods. During a cold, mucus build-ups in the nose can block the nerves in a similar way.