**What Are Taste Buds?**

Did you ever wonder why your favorite foods taste so good? Well, you can thank your **taste buds** for letting you appreciate the saltiness of pretzels and the sweetness of ice cream.

Taste buds are sensory organs that are found on your [tongue](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/tongue.html) and allow you to experience tastes that are sweet, salty, sour, and bitter. How exactly do your taste buds work? Well, stick out your tongue and look in the mirror.

See all those bumps? Those are called [**papillae**](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/word-papillae.html) (say: puh-PILL-ee), and most of them contain taste buds. Taste buds have very sensitive microscopic hairs called microvilli (say: mye-kro-VILL-eye). Those tiny hairs send messages to the brain about how something tastes, so you know if it's sweet, sour, bitter, or salty.

The average person has about 10,000 taste buds and they're replaced every 2 weeks or so. But as a person ages, some of those taste cells don't get replaced. An older person may only have 5,000 working taste buds. That's why certain foods may taste stronger to you than they do to adults. Smoking also can reduce the number of taste buds a person has.

But before you give taste buds all the credit for your favorite flavors, it's important to thank your **nose**. **Olfactory** (say: ahl-FAK-tuh-ree) **receptors** inside the uppermost part of the [nose](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/nose.html) contain special cells that help you smell. They send messages to the [brain](https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/brain.html).

Here's how it works: While you're chewing, the food releases chemicals that immediately travel up into your nose. These chemicals trigger the olfactory receptors inside the nose. They work together with your taste buds to create the true flavor of that yummy slice of pizza by telling the brain all about it!

**287 words**

<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/taste-buds.html#:~:text=Taste%20buds%20have%20very%20sensitive,every%202%20weeks%20or%20so>.