

...areas for
...in a brain region called the
gustatory cortex.
Most people who are picky with their
food are considered to have a disorder and

happen regularly so that children can watch
others enjoying a variety of foods.
It is not a choice for one to be picky at
their food sometimes but may because
their body does not tolerate some foods.

...their body would have a difficult
time digesting it. However, if someone
is allergic to the same food, it could be
life-threatening due to a reaction called
anaphylaxis.
Compiled by Beatrice Nakibuuka

LIFESTYLE

What your tongue says about your health

Like other parts of the body, the tongue can show signs of illness or trauma to let us know that something is not quite right. Being able to recognise signs associated with your tongue can help you pinpoint what is wrong.

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The tongue might seem like the smallest part of the body, and almost inconsequential, but did you know that it is the rudder that steers the vessel that is your body? Many times, when you cannot coherently explain your symptoms in the consultation room, a doctor will ask you to stick out your tongue so that he or she might have a look at it because the tongue serves as a mirror that reflects the health status of the body.

Dr Esta Lynn Musinguzi, a dental surgeon with Pan Dental Surgery, says the whole mouth can tell the health of a person. "The tongue is just a part of the mouth that a doctor may look at but it gives important cues."

The appearance of the surface of your tongue could be communicating something about your general health. Looking at your tongue could save you both social embarrassment and a complicated health situation. So, take the bold step of standing in front of the mirror and stick out your tongue.

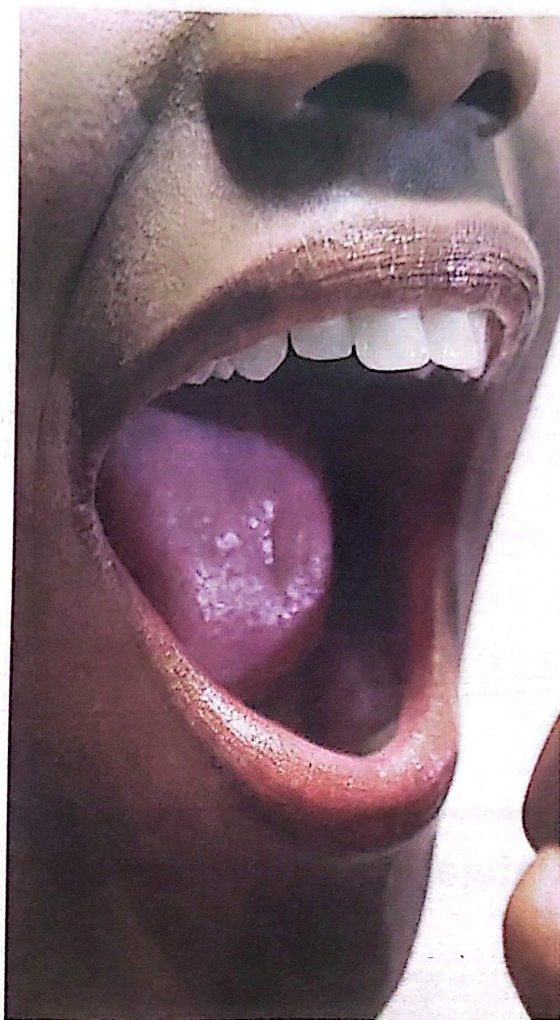
Whitish tongue

If you have a white or cream coating on the tongue, try brushing it every morning and evening for a few days. If the white colour has been brought on by poor dental hygiene, it will go away.

However if the white colour does not disappear, it is a sign of a yeast infection or oral thrush. "It could be a fungal infection, such as candida or caused by immunal suppressions caused by cancer or HIV," Dr Musinguzi says, adding, "The mouth has fungus and bacteria in it and if you have been taking antibiotics for a long time this may encourage the bacteria to grow."

Since most people brush their teeth at least once a day, one may wonder how bacteria or a yeast infection can survive in the mouth. "There is a small difference between the condition of the mouth and the vagina. Both have the similar bacteria buildup, pH and acidity levels. Newborn babies can get candida during childbirth as they are passing through the vaginal canal."

Most times, an oral fungal infection is painless, but in some cases, it can cause a burning sensation and taste



A healthy tongue should be pink and covered with small nodules (papillae). Any deviation from your tongue's normal appearance, or any pain, may be cause for concern. FILE PHOTO

disturbances. Dr Musinguzi advises that if you have a white or cream coating on your tongue, visit a doctor. "The tongue might be just dirty and you have not cleaned but, it could also be a sign of cancer."

Brown or black hairy tongue

If the colour of your tongue is brown or black, giving it the appearance of being hairy, you may have neglected your oral hygiene. "The tongue has papilla, which are small bumps on the surface," Dr Musinguzi says, adding, "Over time, they may trap food, especially if the diet mainly consists of yoghurt and milk. Sometimes, the papilla can become

overgrown, making them more likely to become discoloured by food, cigarette smoke, soft diet, or coffee."

This brown or black colour, although benign, can cause bad breath and bring about a metallic taste in the mouth. If the papilla is overgrown, it may cause one to gag easily while eating. Treatment usually involves cessation of taking the food stuffs that bring about the condition and improving oral hygiene.

Small white patches

These could mean that something is irritating your mouth. These lesions are more common in smokers but can be caused by an abrasion, where the broad



ken off edges of teeth are constantly rubbing on the tongue.

Burning sensation

If your tongue looks normal but has a burning sensation, you need to see your doctor immediately to find out the cause. It could be because you are using the wrong toothpaste. You might have been using one type of toothpaste for many years, and have recently switched to a new one with different ingredients.

"A burning sensation could also be caused by a dry mouth, certain medications, or hormonal changes in the body," Dr Musinguzi says, adding nutritional deficiencies, such as a lack of minerals and vitamins in the diet could cause a burning sensation."

A burning sensation on the tongue and mouth could also be associated to depression and anxiety.

Painful sores

These irritating canker sores can occur on the tongue or on the inner parts of the mouth or cheeks. They are your body's way of telling you your stress levels are high or you are sensitive to some foods. "A simple canker sore can also be caused or made worse by tissue injury or eating citrus fruits and vegetables, using certain types of toothpastes, and biting your tongue during chewing," Dr Musinguzi says.

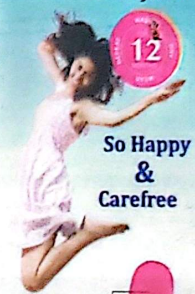
However, the more complex sores could be a sign of an impaired immune system or nutritional problems. If they last for more than two weeks, or keep on recurring, you should consider consulting a doctor.

"However, if it is a cold sore - which is a liquid or pus-filled painful blister - on the tongue or lips, it is contagious and is caused by herpes simplex virus. This definitely warrants a visit to the doctor."

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