

TASTE IN THE GUT

In contrast to taste receptors in the mouth, T1R and T2R receptors in the gut do not induce sensations of taste, but rather initiate molecular pathways that help guide the digestion or rejection of food substances traveling through the intestines. The underlying pathways, however, have many similarities.

FOODS IN THE GUT

A Specialized endocrine cells of the small intestine, known as enteroendocrine cells, display T2R bitter receptors on their cell membranes. When bitter compounds bind to the T2R receptors, the cells release the peptide hormone cholecystikinin (CCK), which acts on CCK2 receptors located on enterocytes, or intestinal absorptive cells. This increases the expression of the transporter ABCB1, which pumps toxins or unwanted substances out of the cell and back into the intestinal lumen. CCK also binds to CCK1 receptors on sensory fibers of the vagus nerve, sending signals to the brain to cease food intake.

B T1R-class receptors on enteroendocrine cells lining the small intestine detect sweet substances and respond by secreting the glucagon-like peptide GLP-1. GLP-1 then travels to the pancreas via the bloodstream, where it boosts the release of insulin from pancreatic β -cells, promoting the uptake of glucose by diverse tissues. Additionally, GLP-1 diffuses to neighboring enterocyte cells in the small intestine, driving the insertion of the glucose transporters SGLT-1 and GLUT2, which facilitates the uptake of glucose from the intestines.

C In the colon, bitter ligands bind to T2R receptors on epithelial cells, where they induce the secretion of anions and water, which leads to fluid rushing into the intestine, resulting in diarrhea that flushes out the colon.

