

## Fighting Bad Breath



### Here are some facts about halitosis, otherwise known as bad breath...

- 90% of bad breath is influenced by what is happening in the mouth and not in the stomach.
- Most people are not aware that they have bad breath.
- Bad breath may signal a medical disorder.
- Some medications can play a role in causing halitosis.
- Sulphur- producing bacteria normally found in the mouth cause halitosis.
- The gums and tongue are the most common sites where bad breath originates.

Bad breath can be of great embarrassment. If you are concerned about halitosis, we are here to help. A proper dental examination can help determine the cause, or causes, and a treatment plan can be developed to help eliminate the problem.

### The causes of bad breath can be divided into five areas...

- Dental
- Diet, nutrition and eating habits
- Medical
- Life style

Because 90% of bad breath is dental related, an accurate diagnosis is likely in most cases. Bad breath is caused by bacteria that occur naturally in the mouth. What we will look at is what causes these bacteria to increase and lead to bad breath.

### But first let us look at some myths about bad breath...

- You can tell you have bad breath by breathing into your hands
- Mouthwashes can prevent bad breath
- Bad breath mostly comes from the stomach

**Because 90% of bad breath is caused by dental issues, an accurate dental examination is important. Dental causes include:**

- Incorrect or infrequent brushing of the teeth
- Infrequent or improper flossing
- Cavities
- Gum disease
- Defective fillings
- Bad fitting dentures, bridges, crowns or implants
- Braces that are not being cleaned or brushed properly
- Sleeping with dentures
- Breathing through the mouth
- Dental abscess
- Not brushing the tongue or gums effectively
- Old toothbrushes
- Thumb sucking
- High dairy products like cheese



- Food stuck between the teeth

Persistent bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth can be one of the warning signs of periodontal disease. The reason bad breath smells the way it does is because the bacteria that cause it produce sulfur which has a rotten egg smell. The gums and the tongue are the number one #1 site for the development of halitosis.



If the cause is not dental, then we have to look at other causes, like diet, nutrition and eating habits.

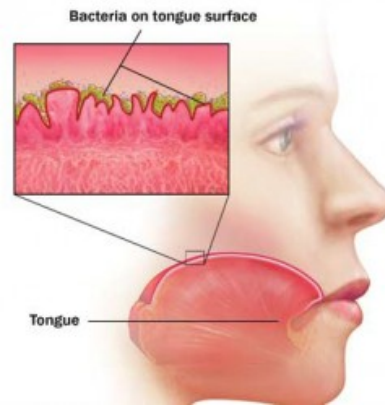
**Foods and drinks that promote bad breath include:**

- Broccoli, cabbage, onions, garlic, coffee, cheese, radish, cauliflower, milk, and foods/drinks high in sugar
- Bad eating habits like missing breakfast
- Dieting

Dieters may develop halitosis when they have infrequent meals. Diets low in carbohydrates or that have no carbs can produce a state of hunger that leads to a condition called ketoacidosis which can produce bad breath as the body breaks down its reserve of fat and protein. Certain foods like garlic contribute as well. In fact garlic is so powerful that garlic odour on the breath can be detected after garlic is rubbed on the feet!

**Let us look at some medical causes of halitosis:**

- Post nasal drip
- Sinusitis
- Xerostomia (dry mouth)
- Oral cancer
- Acid reflux/heart burn
- Diabetes
- Adenoid problems
- Liver/kidney ailments
- HIV/AIDS
- Respiratory diseases
- Liver diseases
- Kidney diseases
- Systemic diseases



Kidney failure can cause an odor similar to urine, and liver failure can cause an odor described as 'fishy'. People with uncontrolled diabetes have a 'fruity' breath odor. Chronic reflux of stomach acids from your stomach into your food pipe (gastroesophageal reflux), and hiatal hernia (a protrusion of the stomach into the chest cavity) can produce bad breath.

**Life style causes include:**

- Not drinking enough (at least eight 8 oz glasses) of water/day
- Smoking
- Medications

We all know that smoking is not good. It causes gum disease and bad breath. We are familiar with smokers' breath. The odour from tobacco occurs for two reasons. First tar and nicotine accumulate as a brownish stain on the tongue and teeth. Secondly, tobacco has a drying effect on the mouth.

**Medications that can cause bad breath include:**



- Diuretics
- Meds for hyperactive bladder
- Antihistamines
- Drugs for anxiety
- Antidepressants
- High blood pressure meds
- Drugs for nervous treatment

**Self- Care**

Maintaining a healthy smile is essential to reducing or preventing bad breath. Most people can improve or prevent bad breath by practicing proper dental hygiene, including these steps:

- Brush your teeth after you eat. Keep a toothbrush at work but change it every week.
- Floss at least once a day to remove food from between your teeth.
- Brush your tongue, gums, cheeks and roof of the mouth to remove dead cells, bacteria and food debris.
- If you wear a denture, clean it once a day as directed by your dentist. Try to take the denture out at night-do not sleep with it.
- Drink plenty of water (64 oz/day), and avoid too much coffee, sodas or alcohol.
- Sugarless chewing gum can stimulate saliva, washing away food particles and bacteria.
- Change your toothbrush every 1-2 months. Your office toothbrush every week.
- Avoid a lot of dairy products
- Have defective dental restorations restored
- Have gums checked and treated

**Some dental aids that can be considered in the fight against halitosis are:**

The toothbrush you use should be effective and comfortable – an ultrasonic or an electric toothbrush can be considered for those who may not have the dexterity to use a manual one otherwise a manual is just as good. PLEASE only use a soft toothbrush.

A water- pick or a hydromagnetic irrigator, while not the final answer, can be a valuable addition to the home care techniques for eliminating halitosis especially for those who have large spaces between their teeth.

A tongue scraper can be one of the most valuable tools in fighting halitosis.

If you feel you must constantly use a breath freshener to hide unpleasant breath, see your dentist. Your dentist may recommend using a special antimicrobial mouthwash.

At least twice a year, see your dentist to get your teeth and dentures examined and professionally cleaned.

**Useful herbs to help fight bad breath:**

- Echinacea liquid
- Fresh parsley
- Tea tree oil toothpaste

We hope this has helped. Any further questions, we are always here!

Last Updated on 08 April 2010