



The causes of bad breath (halitosis) and how to treat it

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Did you know that one of the top complaints Americans have about their co-workers is bad breath? Bad breath, or halitosis, is an embarrassing condition that most people don't like to talk about, but understanding the common causes and treatments can make addressing it a bit more palatable.



Do

- * prevent plaque from forming through good habits
- * use oral products to reduce bad breath
- * replace your toothbrush
- * invest in an electric toothbrush



Don't

- * eat too many odor-causing foods at once
- * practice poor oral hygiene
- * ignore dry mouth (xerostomia)
- * forget that oral conditions can be signs of other health problems

Do prevent plaque from forming through good habits

A good daily oral health regime will help to ensure you prevent plaque from forming and bad breath from ensuing. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- * Brush your teeth at least twice a day
- * Floss at least once a day
- * Brush the tongue or use a tongue-scraper to remove bacteria
- * Drink lots of water (not sodas, coffee or alcohol, which can all contribute to bad breath)

Do use oral products to reduce bad breath

Certain products can help to keep bad breath at bay, for example:

- * Chew sugar-free gum
- * Use over-the-counter dry mouth rinses and saliva substitutes
- * Look for oral products with the ingredients cetylpyridinium chloride or chlorine dioxide, which have an immediate effect at eliminating volatile sulfur compounds.

Keep in mind that while the products mentioned above can be helpful for dealing with occasional bad breath, if you find yourself resorting to these measures frequently, you should see your dentist to get screened for gingivitis or periodontal disease.

Do replace your toothbrush

You should replace your toothbrush at least once every three months. Also, replace it after you have an episode of flu, cold or other viral infections. Bacteria can implant themselves on the toothbrush bristles leading to re-infection.

Do invest in an electric toothbrush

Most studies show that an electric toothbrush, when used properly, improves oral hygiene. Many have a timer, encouraging users to brush for a full two minutes, which alone is helpful. In individuals who have decreased manual dexterity (due to arthritis, cerebral palsy, or Parkinson's, for example), they are especially helpful. Caregivers for patients with these conditions can usually accomplish more brushing in a shorter amount of time.

Do not eat too many odor-causing foods at once

Foods are digested in the mouth first, eventually making their way into the bloodstream and to the lungs, all the while releasing volatile sulfur compounds (stinky!). These odors can last until the odor-causing food digests completely. So, even if you brush, floss, and use mouthwash, you are only covering up these odors temporarily.

Do not practice poor oral hygiene

The mouth contains many natural bacteria, which feed on leftover food particles. Within a few days, this process can result in plaque forming on the teeth. Plaque not only gives off an offensive odor, but also can start the disease process known as gingivitis or advance to periodontal disease.

Do not ignore dry mouth (xerostomia)

Our saliva helps to wash away food particles and contains natural antibodies that fight bacteria. A decrease in saliva production can have many causes. One of the most common causes is medications - more than 400 medications are known to cause a chronic dry mouth. Mouth breathing can also lead to dry mouth, which makes you more susceptible to tooth decay, periodontal disease and bad breath.

Do not forget that oral conditions can be signs of other health problems

Some medical conditions can contribute to bad breath, including mouth sores, tonsil stones, sinus infections, menstruation, stomach problems and metabolic disorders.

Summary

Understanding the common causes of halitosis is the first step to eliminating it. Following the several simple steps outlined above will have you on your way to getting rid of bad breath for good. And if they don't work, go see your dentist. More expert advice about Dental Problems

- * Save your child's tooth when it gets chipped or knocked out
- * Take steps to reduce pain when your child loses their baby teeth
- * Stop the pain from bleeding gums and consult with a dentist
- * What to do when you have bleeding gums to ensure your oral health
- * Expert advice to help you cure dry mouth (Xerostomia)