

Dental Health: Causes And Treatment For Bad Breath

The medical name for bad breath is halitosis. Causes can range from poor oral hygiene habits and foods you eat to various other health problems and unhealthy lifestyles. If you eat foods with strong odors like garlic or onions you basically have to wait until the foods have passed through your body before the odor is completely gone. You can mask it with brushing and mouthwash to cover up the odor temporarily. All food you eat begins the breaking down process in your mouth. As food digests and is absorbed into the bloodstream, it is eventually carried to the lungs and given off in your breath.

Poor dental hygiene habits promote bacteria growth between teeth, around the gums and on the tongue, which causes bad breath. If you don't brush and floss your teeth daily, the food particles that remain in your mouth begins to promote bacteria growth on teeth, gums and the tongue. If dentures are not properly cleaned, bacteria and food particles can cause bad breath.

Other unhealthy lifestyles that include smoking or chewing tobacco-based products can cause bad breath, stain the teeth and irritate gum tissues.

Health problems associated with bad breath include:

- Gum or periodontal disease
- Poorly fitting dental appliances
- Yeast infections of the mouth
- Dental cavities
- Dry mouth (dry mouth may be caused by side effects of medications, salivary gland problems or continuous breathing through the mouth)
- Respiratory tract infections like pneumonia or bronchitis
- Chronic sinus infections
- Postnasal drip
- Diabetes
- Chronic acid reflux
- Liver or kidney problems

Tips on how to prevent or reduce bad breath include:

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste and brush after you eat
- Always brush your tongue
- Replace toothbrush every 2 to 3 months
- Use floss or interdental cleaner to remove food particles and plaque between your teeth once a day
- Remove dentures at night and clean thoroughly before placing in your mouth the next morning
- See your dentist at least twice a year.
- Stop smoking/chewing tobacco-based products
- Drink lots of water to keep your mouth moist
- Chew cinnamon flavored, sugar free gum (read the food label for the ingredient Xylitol. Studies show Xylitol in sugar free gum can help to destroy the bacteria in your mouth and give you that just brushed clean feeling as well. The flavor "cinnamon" has also been shown in some studies to be the best flavor to combat against bad breath.
- Mouthwashes you buy over-the-counter generally provide a temporary way to mask unpleasant mouth odor. There are some antiseptic brands of mouth-rinse products that do help kill the germs that cause bad breath. Ask your dentist which product is best for you.

In most cases your dentist can find and treat the cause of bad breath. If your dentist determines the odor is due to gum disease you may be referred to a periodontist. A periodontist specializes in treating gum conditions. If the dentist finds your mouth to be healthy you may be referred to a family physician, internist or some other specialist to determine the odor source and an appropriate treatment plan.

Disclaimer: *This article is not meant to diagnose, treat or cure any kind of a health problem. These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. Always consult with your health care provider about any kind of a health problem and especially before beginning any kind of an exercise routine.