

Bad Breath

The embarrassment of bad breath

A lot of people are embarrassed by their bad breath, but it is a problem that can be solved. Certain foods and beverages can cause bad breath. When strong foods, like onions and garlic, are the cause, bad breath is temporary.

The causes of bad breath

Most bad breath, also known as halitosis, is caused by poor oral hygiene.

When you eat, minute particles of food get trapped between your teeth and in the tiny grooves and bumps on your tongue. The particles grow bacteria which release a sulfur compound that causes bad breath.

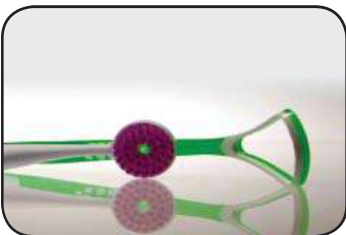
Another common cause of bad breath is dry mouth. Dry mouth happens naturally when you sleep, causing morning breath, and it is worse if you sleep with your mouth open.

Some medications also cause dry mouth, and it is more common as you age.

And smokers? Almost all people who use tobacco have bad breath.



Bacteria on the tongue



Tongue cleaning appliance



Bad breath can be embarrassing

Diagnosis and treatment

Proper brushing and flossing are the first line of defense against halitosis.

Many people use mouthwash to combat bad breath, but most over-the-counter mouthwashes are just a temporary mask and do not solve the problem. We may recommend a medicated mouthwash.

Here are some ways you can improve your breath:

- ❖ Brush after every meal. You might want to carry a toothbrush with you.
- ❖ Floss at least once a day.
- ❖ Brush your tongue to help dislodge any remaining particles. You can use your toothbrush or a special tongue cleaner. Bacteria can build up, so use a new toothbrush. You should change your toothbrush every three to four months.
- ❖ To avoid dry mouth, stay hydrated by drinking lots of water. Other liquids like soda and coffee do not count because they can cause bad breath.
- ❖ If you wear dentures or braces, clean them well.
- ❖ See your dentist at least twice a year for a professional cleaning.

Sometimes, bad breath is a sign of a more serious health problem. If your breath has a particular odor, perhaps fishy, fruity, or smells like ammonia, you might need to see your physician.

With good care on your part, you can combat bad breath and enjoy life with confidence.