

Do you have Bad Breath?

Have you or a significant person in your life suffered with breath issues? 90 percent of all bad breath or halitosis, originates in the mouth. However, most people are not aware of the actual causes of this issue. We have had many patients over the years come in feeling self-conscious about their breath and despite trying all the obvious hygiene techniques, still haven't solved this problem. So what can you do to prevent or address bad breath? This month I want to cover some obvious reasons and solutions for bad breath, as well as some other causes that may be surprising for some.

Bacteria: Poor habits could lead to a chronic breath issue. If you don't brush and floss daily, food particles remain in the mouth, that promotes bacterial growth between the teeth, around gums and on the tongue. Practicing good oral hygiene may be the simplest answer for some people.

• **Proper oral hygiene.** Brushing twice a day and flossing once per day will remove the debris and plaque that leads to breath problems.

• **Brush your tongue!** Most people overlook their tongues that can be harboring bacteria that lead to bad breath. Tongue scrapers are also very good tools for patients who feel that their toothbrush is too large or ineffective in properly cleaning their tongue.



Dentally Speaking
by
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• **Gum disease.** Persistent bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth may be warning signs of gum (periodontal) disease. Gum disease is caused by the buildup of plaque on teeth leading to inflamed gums, tartar formation below the gums and if not treated, the loss of teeth and jawbone. Healthy gums do NOT bleed. If you have not had regular visits to your dentist or have bleeding gums, this may be the source of your breath problem.

Dry Mouth: Any condition that dries the tissues of the mouth, preventing saliva from washing away bacteria, encourages bad breath. These are some of the common causes of dry mouth (xerostomia):

• **Medications.** Many drugs main side effect is dry mouth. Antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs and blood pressure medications are among some of the common drugs that cause dry mouth leading to breath issues.

• **Dehydration.** Not staying hydrated throughout the day or eating and drinking things that dehydrate you

(alcohol, caffeine products) can cause your mouth to be prone to more bacteria overgrowth.

• **Mouth breathing.** This can be the result of people with airway issues that suffer from snoring, sleep apnea or asthma.

Health Issues: Most people are unaware that systemic conditions can result in bad breath. Tooth and gum infections are recognized sources of bad breath, but so are bronchitis, sinus infections and even a cold. Some other ailments that can cause bad breath include:

- **Acid reflux**
- **Diabetes**
- **Liver or kidney problems**

In most cases, your dentist can treat your bad breath. If your dentist determines that your mouth is healthy and the odor is not of oral origin, you may be referred to your family doctor or to a specialist to determine the cause. If the odor is due to gum disease, for example, your dentist can either treat the disease or refer you to a periodontist, a dentist who specializes in treating gum conditions. Regular visits to your dentist will give you the proper care and guidance to prevent or manage any breath issues.

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