



Bad Breath to Sweet Breath

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What is Bad Breath?

Acute bad breath is a very common problem caused by such things as oral dryness, stress, hunger, eating certain foods such as garlic and onions, smoking, and poor oral care. Morning breath is a typical example of transient bad breath. However, Chronic bad breath is a far more serious condition affecting one quarter of the population in different capacities, and usually has a bad impact on the individual's capacity to maintain good personal and business relationship, leading to catastrophe.

Halitosis is caused by the presence of a huge colony of oral bacteria and invariably requires persistent treatment. Presently, persistent halitosis is not clearly understood or even identified as a curable condition by most medical experts, so a proper and effective treatment is almost impossible to find. Most of the treatment available is mostly asymptotic and are limited to controlling bad breath by mouth and breath fresheners. Though many breath clinics have sprouted like mushroom, all over the world, many of them are not really successful. However, a very small number of clinics use established methods of microbiological examination to determine the varieties of odor-causing bacteria. The specific bacteria are then controlled by patient specific treatments, thus giving patients relief from the ordeal.

Though the reasons for bad breath odor are not completely understood, most unpleasant odors are known to occur due to food debris trapped in the mouth. It is really amazing to find as many as 400 different types of bacteria in an average mouth! Trouble can occur when several dozen of these are allowed to flourish in large proportions or are genetically mutated to reproduce in a large number. Many species of these bacteria are usually found on the back of the tongue, where they find protection and security from normal mouth activity. The rough edges of our tongue usually harbor millions of these harmful bacteria, which create toxins by digesting debris, dead cells, and other residues. These toxins are harmful in creating a bad odor in the breath. The anaerobic respiration of these bacteria will accrue residual compounds containing sulfides and ammonia. These bad compounds often mix with the breath to form an aerosol of nausea and bad odor. Other causes of chronic bad breath may be periodontitis (gum disease), diabetes, kidney failure, sinusitis, tonsilloliths, gastroesophageal reflux disorder (GERD), and a wide variety of prescription drugs.

The causes of Bad Breath

The majority of bad breath problems begin in the mouth. Bad breath that is of mouth origin can be traced to a sulphur compound produced by bacteria. Dead and dying bacterial cells release this sulphur compound, which gives the breath a bad odor.

Bacterial plaque, debris and food waste accumulate on the back of the tongue. The tongue's surface is extremely rough and bacteria can reside easily in the cracks and crevices. Large amounts of sulphur compounds can be produced in this area, making it a frequent site of origin for bad breath.

The tooth attracts bacteria containing plaque, debris and if not cleaned regularly and thoroughly, this can result in large accumulations of bacteria which result in bad breath. People who have Periodontitis disease often experience bad breath because of bacteria accumulating in areas that are not cleaned easily, such as deep fissures around teeth. Fortunately, treatment is very effective for people who have bad breath of mouth origin.

Other reasons for bad breath are:

- Sinus or respiratory infections
- Diabetes related acetone smell
- Fishy odor in case of kidney disease
- Liver problems
- Digestive disorders
- Dieting and fasting related foul odors

Diagnosing Bad Breath

We can not really make out that we have a bad mouth odor, due to process of habituation. However, people we usually associate with can really identify the bad breath coming out of our mouth. The degree of bad breath depends mainly on oral dryness and amount of residual toxins in the mouth.

The simplest method to check whether you have bad breath or not, is to lick the back of your wrist and allow the saliva to dry for some time and smell the area.

Another easy way is to lightly scrape the back of the tongue with an inverted spoon or a piece of dental floss, and to test for the smell of the dried residue. You may need to ask your spouse to smell your breath and give you a proper opinion. Of late highly reliable home tests are made available which test for the presence of polyamines and sulphur compounds on tongue swabs. You may need to test several times in a day to arrive at an average result. However, if bad breath is continuous and everlasting, and all other factors have been ruled out, you will consider taking sophisticated tests using modern technology.

A new portable sulfide monitor called the Halimeter is being used widely to test for levels of sulphur emissions in the mouth air. However, it has drawbacks in clinical and lab applications. For example, many common sulfides are not recorded as easily and can be read erroneously in test results. Certain foods such as garlic and onions produce sulphur in the breath for as long as 48 hours and can result in false readings. The Halimeter is also found to be very sensitive to alcoholic drinks; you may need to avoid drinking alcohol or using alcohol-rich mouthwashes for at least 12 hours prior to being tested. This meter will lose its sensitivity over time and requires periodic recalibration to remain accurate.

Modern research have given us portable gas chromatography machines such as the “OralChroma”, which is specifically designed to digitally measure molecular levels of the three major odor compounds in a sample of mouth air. It is extremely accurate in its results and produces visual conclusions in graph form via computer interface.

Microbiological testing of swab samples of teeth and tongue residue remains the most accurate method of determining the specific bacterial causes of oral malodor. It is very authentic too!

Home care to Reduce Bad Breath

You can use commercially available breath fresheners or mouth washes for temporary relief from bad breath. However, most of them are temporary and act by masking the smell producing layers of tongue and once the effect wears off, the bad breath will resurface with renewed vigor. Using anti-bacterial mouth rinses may provide you better results in controlling bad breath. Always avoid alcohol containing mouth rinses as alcohol is a drying agent and will worsen the problem sooner or later.

Evidence suggests that the most effective products are generally unavailable in drugstores, but are usually found on the internet pharmacies. Top of the brand home breath tests and antibacterial rinses, toothpastes, gums, mints, and tongue gels are always costlier like any

premium product; but unlike the well-known inexpensive brand names, they can really control your problem to a marked degree. However, you will need to be extra cautious in finding remedies on internet as there are chances of you getting ripped off for a higher price or you may not simply find the right medication. In such cases, you will have to do trial and error exercises to find the best pharmacy.

Never forget to brush your teeth after meals and a regular flossing at least once in a day will remove putrefying food debris from between the teeth, especially at the gum line and posterior of the tongue. Gently cleaning the tongue surface twice daily with a tongue brush, tongue scraper or tongue cleaner will help you keep your tongue and teeth in good shape and health. Alternatively, you can also use an inverted teaspoon to scrap the surface of your tongue. Tooth brush will not work well in scraping the back of your tongue as the bristles will not reach the back parts of your tongue. Be careful to avoid scraping the V-shaped row of taste buds found at the extreme back of the tongue. Brushing a small amount of antibacterial mouth rinse or tongue gel onto the tongue surface will further inhibit bacterial action.

Since dry mouth can increase bacterial buildup and cause or worsen bad breath, chewing sugarless gum can help with the production of saliva, and thereby help to reduce bad breath. Some gums, toothpastes, sprays, and gels which combat dry mouth for several hours have recently been marketed over the counter. Maintain water levels in the body by drinking several glasses of water a day. Adding lemon juice to your water is refreshing and also beneficial. Parsley is a natural breath freshener when chewed slowly, and is easy to grow at home.

Some studies have shown that eating yoghurt, drinking green tea, or chewing cinnamon or sugarless cinnamon gum can reduce bad breath.

Simple Home Remedies to Cure Bad Breath

Though the use of home remedies to cure bad breath is yet to be scientifically proved, the extent of bad breath can definitely be reduced by using some of the home remedies available right in your home. Here are some tips and suggestions to help you out in reducing your bad breath.

Most common herbals to reduce bad breath are:

Parsley (*Petroselinum sativum*): It has been used to correct bad breath traditionally to minimize odors associated with garlic and onion intake. Eat fresh, dried parsley is not effective.

Cardamom seeds: chew to sweeten your breath. The aromatic flavor in cardamom is a breath freshener. chewing a green cardamom after meals and during eating breaks

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*): It is used for sore throat and gingivitis; it dries excess secretion such as mucus from sinus infection.

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*): It used as a mouth rinse to kill fungus, bacteria and virus, strong antiseptic, good for colds and flu.

Clove (*Eugenia aromaticum*) It is good for bad breath caused by rotting food in mouth, used in old time mouth wash and powders, herb can be drying.

Myrrh (*Commiphora molmol*): It is used for bad breath, infections of mouth, teeth, throat and sinus, long history of use for gum disease and toothache.

Echinacea, Purple Coneflower or Snake root (*E. angustifolia*, *E. purpurea*, *E. pallida*, and *E. tennessiensis*): This herb besides helping to boost the immune system also increases salivation, and act as a mouth rinse. It has been used for sore throat and gingivitis.

Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctora*): It is good for sore throat, mouth and gum abscess, good mouthwash and stimulates immune system.

Spilanthes, Toothache plant (*Spilanthes oleracea*): This herb is antifungal and antibacterial, it good for thrush, pyorrhea, gingivitis and toothache.

Frankincense (*Boswellia carterii*): This herb is antibacterial, used topically for sores, increases circulation, used for toothache.

Goldenseal, Oregon Grape and Barberry are good topical lotions for mouth rinse and sore throat infections.

Fenugreek (*methi*) made into a tea. Seeds are also beneficial in bad breath.

Peppermint leaves: mix three parts of fresh leaves with two parts of water. Grind in blender until solution is thick. Gargle one cup of the solution everyday for one week. Each day your breath will get better. Make fresh concoction every other day.

Questions and Answers

Is it possible for you to smell your own breath?

In most of us, the tongue is probably the major source of oral malodor and bad breath. Here is small tip on how to smell on your own: Stick out your tongue as far as it will come out, and lick one of your wrists with your own saliva. Wait five seconds, and smell. You will be surprised to find that even you have your own odor.

Strangely, the smell of the front end of the tongue isn't the real problem. It is at the deepest part of your mouth, towards your throat. In many people with bad breath, there will be a yellowish mucous on the back of the mouth and this can be collected with a scrapping of the posterior surface of the tongue.

Where does the odor on the back of the tongue come from?

Though uncertain, it seems that the origin of this material is post-nasal drip, as many people do suffer from post nasal drip. As all of us know, most of the mucus secretion rolls down your throat, but some of it may get stuck on the tongue. After a few days, it starts putrefying on the skin layers when millions of bacteria start breaking it down to smell causing compounds. Whether or not this is true, the back of the tongue is a major source of bad breath, and the odor which it gives off has a typical smell of its own.

Bad Breath from the Stomach! Is it true?

Though there are reported cases of bad breath emanating from stomach, such occurrences are very rare. The esophageal tube, which connects the stomach with your mouth, is not an always open tube, but is closed most of the times. Every chunk of food you ingest moves down so slowly down to the stomach, just like a snakes eating frog. We often belch sometimes with every food chunk, when a little bubble of air moves from the stomach to the mouth. Whenever, there is a belching incident, some people may emit foul smelling gas from their stomach. However, though it may sound true, bad odor from your stomach is a rare occurrence. Thus it seems that stomach is probably the last place to look for foul odors and gases.

Bacteria in and around the gum line. How dangerous are they?

Though some people do sport a fine set of teeth, which are health and clean, most of us need to visit of dentists almost on a regular basis. Just ask any of your dentists and he will tell you about that awful odor coming out of your jaw line. Gum line is probably the most

preferred place for harmful bacteria to grow and multiply. There are two types of bacteria; one that needs oxygen to survive properly, and the other which do not required oxygen for their life. Those bacteria which can grow very well even with out oxygen are the most dangerous of the lot, as they are known to create a combination of volatile and foul smelling compounds, which ultimately come out as bad breath.

Is it possible to prevent bad breath by cleaning your teeth properly?

Proper brushing (several minutes every time, making sure to stroke properly, massage the gums and get everywhere), flossing (or a similar method of cleaning between adjacent teeth and gums), and periodic visits to the hygienist are of prime importance in having fresh breath.

Simple Tips for Tongue Brushing

You will need to develop a habit of cleaning your tongue whenever you brush your teeth. Always choose a brush that minimizes reflex action. See that you stroke your brush from near the throat in an outwards motion. Never press very hard with your toothbrush as you may damage your tongue. Use a good mouthwash and freshener liberally.

The best way of cleaning your tongue is to use a tongue scraper. Alternatively, you can also use a piece of gauze, washcloth or other material, which you can wet with mouthwash or water. People with a hairy tongue will have more chances of getting bad breath from their tongue itself. People with serious dental disease will also get serious bad breath problems. Smokers are likely to get a foul smelling mouth odor after repeated usage of cigarettes and tobacco.

How important is flossing the teeth?

It is important to use floss properly, following professional instruction. Remember to floss around the ends of the teeth at the ends of each row. Children would probably have problems flossing, since it requires a delicate control of the fingers they don't have yet. One of the great advantages of using floss is that you can smell the floss directly following each passage between the teeth, and clean the smelly areas more diligently.

Are toothpicks important?

Some dentists recommend anatomical toothpicks, rather than floss to clean the gum lines and crevices. There are several reasons for this advice. Many dentists feel that people are too lazy to use floss on a regular basis, and feel that toothpicks are better substitutes. The advantage of using non-scented toothpicks is that similar to floss, you can smell the

toothpick between each passage and get a very good idea of the places that are causing the odor.

One main disadvantage of the toothpicks is that they are incapable of cleaning behind the last teeth in each row, whereas floss can do that very effectively. Since usually the smell gets worse as you progress from the front teeth working back, a lot of smelly bacteria can be hiding behind the last teeth, particularly if the end tooth in the row is a wisdom tooth.

How effective are sprays and breath mints?

Sprays and regular mint candies are considered to be relatively ineffective in combating bad breath. Don't be fooled by the burning sensation - it is your own cells in pain, not the bacteria.

Should I use mouthwash to control bad breath?

Commercial mouthwash available in your drug store usually contain a formulation consisting of flavor, alcohol, and antibacterial agent. Several types of mouthwash have been shown to reduce malodor in clinical trials, including 0.2% chlorhexidine mouth rinses and Listerine.

When is the best time to rinse?

The best time to use any mouth rinse appears to be right before sleeping in the night. You must deep gargle using a good mouth cleaning liquid, taking care to touch the inner most areas of tongue.

Does chewing gum help relieve my bad breath?

The efficacy of chewing gum is probably due to the effect of salivation, combined with the cleansing effect of mastication. Chewing gum has its downsides. The best compromise appears to be to chew gum for a minute or two at a time. One can chew for a minute or so in privacy, and part with the wad in the washroom, before stepping back into society.

Will chewing cloves really help you get rid of bad breath ?

Yes, Cloves are the best possible home remedy, containing a strong essential oil, which helps prevent bad odor from your mouth. Not everyone likes the taste of cloves, but the essential oil of clove is deadly against the bacteria. The antibacterial agents are oily and can be derived from the clove in the form of essential oil, and can be incorporated into mouthwash and toothpastes. Clove oil also has analgesic properties, and is used by dentists

for all many things. Other essential oils that have some antibacterial activity in the mouth include those derived from eucalyptus, cinnamon and mint.

Does smoking aggravate bad breath?

Apart from its carcinogenic properties, smoking can increase the incidence of gum (periodontal) disease and post-nasal drip, two of the most important bad breath risks. Furthermore, in many people, the smoke odor lingers in the mouth itself and mixes with the other smells, resulting in a particularly noxious aroma. Most probably, the smoke components are retained in the mouth itself, rather than in the lung. Smoke residues in your mouth may lacerate the skin cells, creating a favorable environment for many harmful bacteria to cause infection. This action will invariably affects in bacteria digesting left over food debris and dead cells.

When does bad breath get even worse?

When you wake up from your sleep:

Dry mouth causes bad breath and odor to come out of your mouth at an accelerated speed. During sleep, the tongue and mouth gets dried up due to lack of saliva. As saliva starts increasing in levels, the degree of bad breath comes down.

After eating copious amounts of milk products and meat:

After eating products with high levels of proteins, such as milk products and meat, the level of bad odor from the mouth goes up. If a little piece of meat remains between your teeth for a time, it is rapidly putrefied to toxin compounds. Foods containing excessive amount of onions, garlic, and various spices may cause bad breath.

Some Curious Facts about Bad Breath:

1. Approximately 25% of people in the world suffer from halitosis on a regular basis.
2. A majority of the adult population will invariably face bad breath when they wake up in the morning.
3. Most people in the world do not brush their teeth properly. It usually takes 3 minutes of brushing to reach all nooks and corners of your teeth. Unfortunately, humans fail

miserably when it comes to tooth hygiene. Good dental hygiene i.e. regular brushing and flossing will help to eliminate bad breath.

4. Most people spend just on an average 30-40 seconds in brushing their teeth. By doing this they are missing out cleaning those areas where harmful bacteria thrives well to form sulphur compounds.

5. Bad breath usually comes from the back of the mouth where a bacterium feeds off the accumulated food particles creating bad smelling compounds.

6. Over 200 different species of bacteria live in your mouth— and as many as 50% of these bacteria are found on the back of the tongue.

7. We never emit bad breath until we actually begin to speak. Bad breath often starts near the back of the mouth and is driven forward and out of the mouth only when we start talking.

8. Many foods you eat can cause bad breath. Two of the most common culprits are onions and cabbage, which contain high amounts of sulphur compounds. Upon digestion, these sulphur compounds are absorbed into the blood stream and carried forward to the lungs. These odorous compounds are then exhaled through our mouth.

9. A dry mouth is a perfect environment for bad breath causing bacteria! Saliva is a natural mouthwash and it keeps your tongue wet always, thus washing away bacteria, and dissolving foul smelling volatile sulphur compounds.

10. Sleeping too much, unnecessary dieting, excessive fasting, or talking for long periods of time makes your mouth very dry and increases the likelihood of bad breath. Apart from this certain medications, drugs, alcohol consumption, and nasal breathing can cause the mouth to become dry, thus compounding the problem.

11. If the onset of your bad breath odor has been sudden, is growing noticeably worse over a period of days or weeks, or has been accompanied by the onset of fever, cough, or other symptoms, it would be wise to seek medical consultation.

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