



1. How can I tell if I have bad breath?

- We are unfortunately not always aware of our own bad breath.
- A bad taste or a dry mouth may indicate that you have halitosis.
- Smokers always have bad breath, as do people who eat onions, garlic, strong curry and other strong-smelling foods.
- Your best bet is to ask a friend or relative to tell you if your breath smells.

2. What are the causes of bad breath?

There are several causes of bad breath, ranging from minor, easily treated causes, to those involving disease:

- Poor oral hygiene
Bad breath can accompany poor oral hygiene:
 - Food protein, which remains in the mouth after eating, is broken down into bad smelling sulphur gases by bacteria.
 - These bacteria are normally present in the mouth.
 - This process can take place on the surface of the tongue, or in the gums.
- Gum disease
 - Gum infections can cause bad breath.
 - Gum disease can result in the formation of deep pockets in the gums surrounding the teeth.
 - Plaque and food become trapped in these pockets.
 - The decaying food will smell and cause bad breath.
 - Brushing and flossing cannot remove the food trapped in these pockets.
 - Treatment of gum disease will cure halitosis that is caused in this way.
- Tooth decay
 - Any decomposed material has a bad smell. This applies to teeth as well.
 - Your dentist will remove the decay, and restore the tooth with a filling.
 - The halitosis will be cured by having a tooth restoration after the removal of the decay.
- Strongly flavoured foods
 - Foods like garlic and onions leave their smell on the breath.
 - These odours can be eliminated by chewing sugarless gum, sucking a peppermint, rinsing with a mouthwash, and brushing with a freshening toothpaste.
- Smoking
 - The breath of a smoker has a stale smell.

Bad Breath or Halitosis



- In the short term, a fresher breath can be achieved with peppermints, mouthwashes, sugarless chewing gum, mint and parsley drops, and by brushing with toothpaste.
- Persistently dry mouth, called **xerostomia**
 - This is not the ordinary dry mouth that can be cured by a glass of water.
 - The mouth is persistently dry because the salivary glands are not producing sufficient saliva.
 - Relieving the dry mouth will help to control the bad breath.
 - It can be caused by certain **medications**.
 - Older people are more prone to xerostomia.
 - The cause may be a medical and not a dental problem.
 - Mouth breathing is another cause of dry mouth and bad breath.
 - The cause will have to be established and treated by your dentist or doctor.
 - Saliva substitutes in the form of mouthwashes, lozenges and toothpastes can relieve the dryness.
 - Sugarless chewing gum stimulates the flow of saliva.
 - Sialagogues are medications that stimulate saliva production and may be considered. Ask your doctor.
- Medical problems
Your doctor will need to **diagnose** and treat the cause of your **halitosis**.
Some possible causes are:
 - Digestive or stomach ailments.
 - Respiratory infections in the nose, **sinuses** or lungs.
 - Untreated diabetes leaves an acetone smell on the breath
- Dieting and not eating regularly
 - An empty stomach causes the breath to smell.
- Anxiety and nervousness
 - It is quite common to have bad breath when we are anxious.
- Psychological illness such as Bulimia and Anorexia
 - A psychiatrist or psychologist must treat these serious illnesses.

3. What can I do to have fresh breath?

There is a lot you can do:

- The remedy is to brush and floss your teeth after breakfast and before going to sleep at night.
- Keeping your teeth clean and free of **plaque** is essential.
- The following usually contain mouth freshening ingredients. They all help.
 - Toothpastes.

Bad Breath or Halitosis



- Mouthwashes.
 - Mouthsprays.
 - Chewing gum.
 - Peppermints.
 - Mint and parsley drops.
- Fresh breath kits are available. These include the following:
 - Breath drops.
 - A breath remedy toothpaste.
 - A remedy mouthwash.
 - A tongue scraper.
 - A tongue spray.
 - Thorough cleaning is even more important during orthodontic treatment, as food accumulates around the **braces**.
 - Brush your tongue as well as your teeth.
 - Tongue cleaners can be used to scrape the surface of the tongue, where bacteria can convert food particles into bad smelling sulphur gases.
 - Dentures should be removed at night and cleaned in order to keep the breath fresh.
 - See your dentist twice a year. He will then be able to detect any problems that may be developing.



Tongue cleaning

4. What can my dentist do to cure my bad breath?

- Proper cleaning and scaling of your teeth by your dentist or dental hygienist will improve your breath.
They will remove any **plaque** or **calculus** remaining on your teeth.
This should be done twice a year.
- Your dentist may prescribe an anti-microbial mouthwash to kill the bacteria which cause the **halitosis**.
This mouthwash will not just mask the halitosis with its own smell.
- Treatment of the **gum disease** will eliminate bad breath.
- Your dentist may recommend that you see your doctor if the cause of the halitosis is not in the mouth.



5. How can I clean my tongue?

- Tongue cleaning is a method of removing food particles, white or coloured coatings and bacteria, from the tongue's surface:
 - Tongue cleaners are recommended for scraping the surface of the tongue. It is here that bacteria can convert food particles into bad smelling sulphur gases.
 - A post-nasal drip or a cold can cause coating of the tongue. The coating may be quite thick and contributes to halitosis.
 - Tongue scrapers are designed to remove the coating from the tongue.
 - They are easy to use and come in different sizes for adults and children.
 - They are available from pharmacies or drug stores.