

February 21, 2014



Share the Wellness Tip

Keep It Fresh

Bad breath can be embarrassing. Halitosis (bad breath) can be caused by something as simple as eating garlic or onions or as complex as having diabetes.

Bad breath is often caused by bacteria, which collect on food particles. Poor oral hygiene leads to bad breath because when food particles are left in your mouth, they can rot and start to smell. The food bits may begin to collect bacteria, which can have an odor, too. Not brushing your teeth regularly will let plaque (a sticky, colorless film) build up on your teeth. Plaque is a great place for bacteria to live and yet another reason why breath can turn bad.

Bad breath can be caused from:

- **Poor oral hygiene.** Not brushing and flossing after you eat can leave food stuck between your teeth and gums that can rot and smell.
- **Gum disease, or gingivitis.** Failure to keep your teeth and gums clean can also cause gum disease. Bad breath is one of the symptoms.
- **Medications.** Taking certain drugs—including antidepressants, antihistamines, antihypertensives, antipsychotics, decongestants, narcotics, and drugs for Parkinson's disease—can cause bad breath.

Tobacco use, mouth dryness, and postnasal drip can also affect breath. So can sinus infections, gum disease, and some medical conditions, such as liver disease and diabetes. To attack bad breath, brush your teeth twice a day and floss once a day. Dentures need to be cleaned thoroughly every day. Remember to gently brush the tongue, especially the back part twice a day.

Here are some other strategies:

- Keep your mouth moist with water or sugarless gum.
- Rinse and gargle with a mouthwash your dentist recommends.
- If bad breath persists despite these strategies, talk to your dentist or doctor.

Sources: American Dental Association; Kidshealth.org

