

Bad Breath - Simple steps to prevent bad breath

Bad breath (halitosis) can affect anyone at anytime. Now there are more ways than ever to prevent it.

Where does bad breath come from?

Most of the time, bad breath begins in the mouth and is caused by bacteria breaking down food debris. The type of bacteria that initiates this process needs an environment that is free from oxygen, so they usually inhabit areas that are difficult to reach. These include the pockets around the teeth and deep grooves and fissures in the tongue. In some cases, a systemic condition, such as diabetes, or a problem in the sinuses, pharynx, lungs or stomach may cause the bad breath.

What else can cause bad breath?

Other factors, such as tobacco, alcohol, alcohol-containing mouth rinses, garlic, onion, spicy foods, hunger, dry mouth and morning breath, can also cause bad breath, but are secondary causes to oral bacteria.

How do I get rid of bad breath?

Since bacteria are a major cause of halitosis, reducing them is the best way to eliminate bad breath. If periodontal disease or tooth decay is present, the different types of bacteria increase. Be sure to get a dental examination that includes a periodontal screening. Keeping your mouth clean will help eliminate bacteria. The cleaning process should include brushing, flossing, mouth rinse and cleaning the tongue.

When brushing and flossing, it is important to use the proper technique. Your dentist or hygienist can give you proper brushing and flossing instructions. Tongue cleaning is accomplished using a your toothbrush or a special scraper. Be sure to reach the back part of the tongue, as far as you can reach. Press lightly and pull forward with the scraper or brush. Repeat the procedure several times until the debris is removed. Scrapers and brushes specially designed for tongue cleaning decrease gagging and make tongue cleaning easier.

What about chewing gum?

While chewing gum does not eliminate bacteria associated with halitosis, it does stimulate saliva, which helps neutralize traces of acids from fermented food and reduces tooth decay. Since it moistens and refreshes the mouth, it can sweeten the breath when a toothbrush or mouthwash is not available.

[What about mouthwashes and mints?](#)

Most mouthwashes and breath mints simply mask bad breath. Most dentists agree that it's OK to occasionally use breath mints. Be sure to

select one that is not mostly comprised of sugar. If bad breath persists, see your dentist. It may be a sign of a serious medical or dental condition.