

HALITOSIS

PICTURE THE MOMENT...

You walk into a room and you are very keen to make a good impression. Friendly folks are welcoming you and eager to make your acquaintance, however after a few brief words they politely move away.

You soon get the feeling that nobody wants to talk to you and unfortunately for once you are correct! Unbeknown to you, your breath carries the remnants of last night's lovely garlic prawns, however now it is no longer a very inviting smell!

WHAT IS HALITOSIS?

- Halitosis or bad breath is defined as an unpleasant or offensive odour in the air as we exhale, especially while talking to others.
- The worst thing about halitosis is that the sufferer is usually unaware that they have bad breath!
- It is not a serious medical condition; however, once a person know they have bad breath, it can make a person feel uncomfortable in social situations and cause emotional distress.

HOW CAN YOU CHECK?

A quick test to see if your breath smells, is by licking the inside of your wrist. Wait a few seconds for the saliva to dry. Then smell the licked part of the wrist. If you detect an unpleasant smell, you are likely to have bad breath.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

- Halitosis is commonly caused by consuming certain types of foods. We all know that garlic is a big culprit but so are onions, fish or any foods that are high in fats.
- As our bodies begin the digestion process, chemicals from these foods are absorbed into the bloodstream, travel into the lungs and are released as we breathe. As you breathe out, others breathe in and may smell the unmistakable odour of halitosis.

OTHER POSSIBLE CAUSES

- Most cases of bad breath (85-90%) come from bacteria or debris that builds up in the mouth.
- On average, there are over 600 types of bacteria found in a person's mouth and several of these can produce high levels of bad odours.
- As the bacteria break proteins and other debris in the mouth down, they release foul-smelling gases.
- Food stuck between teeth
Normal teeth brushing may not clear bits of food which can get stuck between teeth. The food then rots and becomes riddled with bacteria.
- Gum disease
This refers to infection or inflammation of the tissues that surround the teeth. If the gums look inflamed or regularly bleed when brushing, gum disease is likely. The bacteria responsible for the infection may cause a foul smell.

- Coating on the back of the tongue

In some people, a coating develops on the back part of the tongue. It may be from mucus that drips down from the back of the nose (postnasal drip) which can contain many bacteria.

Tongue bacteria produce a very bad odour and is responsible for 80 to 90 percent of all cases of mouth-related bad breath.

- Smoking

Most non-smokers can tell if a person is a smoker by their breath which smells like an ashtray.

Stopping smoking is the only cure for this type of bad breath. Smoking also increases the risk of developing gum disease - another cause of bad breath.

- Crash diets or fasting

When fat is broken down in the body to supply energy to those who is trying to reduce their calorie intake, it forms ketones. Ketones can cause a sickly sweet smell on the breath.

- Medical conditions

Chronic lung or sinus infections can cause a build-up of bacteria or viruses that contribute to halitosis as can oral infections such as thrush or Candida. Diabetes, liver disease or kidney disorders can also cause halitosis.

BAD BREATH IN THE MORNING

Most people have some degree of bad breath after a night's sleep. This is normal and occurs because the mouth tends to get dry overnight. It usually clears when the flow of saliva increases after breakfast.



DISCLAIMER

TAKE NOTE

The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

Please note that Heritage Health plans do not necessarily cover the costs of the condition/s described.

