

PATIENT'S PAGE



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BAD BREATH (HALITOSIS) AND YOUR ORAL HEALTH – what you should know...

CAUSES OF HALITOSIS:

There are just as many causes of bad breath as there are sources of bacteria in the mouth. Halitosis may be caused by the following:

• **SOME FOODS AND DRINKS**

The things you eat and drink contribute largely to your oral health care, including your breath. Foods and drinks are absorbed into the bloodstream and become transferred into the lungs. Then they are expelled in the air you breathe. Until that food or drink becomes eliminated by the body, the potential for it affecting your breath is present.

• **POOR ORAL HEALTH CARE**

Without proper and consistent brushing and flossing, and routine examinations by your dentist, food remains in the mouth. This creates a breeding ground for bacteria in your mouth and causes halitosis.

• **IMPROPER AND/OR IRREGULAR CLEANING OF DENTURES**

Dentures that are not cleaned properly or often enough will collect bacteria and will cause halitosis. Consult your dentist or hygienist for proper denture cleaning techniques.

• **PERIODONTAL DISEASE (A DISEASE OF THE GUMS)**

One of the primary symptoms of this gum disease is foul, malodorous breath, and an unpleasant taste in the mouth. This condition requires immediate care by your dentist and may result in your dentist referring your treatment to a specialist known as a periodontist.

• **XEROSTOMIA (DRY MOUTH)**

This condition is often a large contributor to halitosis. Characterized by a significant decrease in saliva production, the mouth is unable to cleanse itself and remove debris and particles left behind by food. Xerostomia may be caused by certain medications, a salivary gland disorder, or by continuously breathing through the mouth, instead of the nose.

• **TOBACCO PRODUCTS**

Not only do tobacco products such as cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco stain the teeth and put the body at risk for a host of diseases, they also contribute to bad breath. Tobacco users also are at significant increased risk for the following:

- o periodontal disease
- o irritated gums
- o a loss of taste abilities

• **A MEDICAL CONDITION**

Halitosis may be an indicator or symptom of any of the following conditions. If your mouth is healthy, your dentist may refer you to your family doctor or medical specialist to determine the cause of your halitosis. Some medical conditions that can cause halitosis are:

- o a respiratory infection
- o chronic bronchitis
- o chronic sinusitis
- o a gastrointestinal disorder
- o infection of the nose, windpipe, or lungs
- o postnasal drip
- o diabetes
- o a liver or kidney disorder

TREATMENT FOR HALITOSIS:

Your dentist will determine the most appropriate treatment for you and specific treatment will be based on:

- the health of your mouth
- the cause or origin of the condition
- extent of the condition
- your tolerance for specific medications, procedures, or therapies

Halitosis is an oral health condition characterized by consistently malodorous breath. If you're concerned about bad breath, talk to your dentist. Often identifying the cause of bad breath is the first step toward treating this preventable condition and your dentist can help identify the cause, and, if it's due to an oral condition, develop a treatment plan to help eliminate it.

A major source of bad breath in healthy people is microbial deposits on the tongue, especially the back of the tongue. Some studies have shown that simply brushing the tongue reduced bad breath by up to 70%.