

Bad breath could be described as an unpleasant odour coming from the mouth region.

#### **What to look for**

- a stale, unpleasant odour coming from the mouth.
- a foul, putrid odour coming through the mouth from the stomach or other internal organs.

Bad breath affects most people at some time, however usually just resuming normal healthy oral hygiene helps re-establish a fresh smelling mouth. Occasionally people worry they have bad breath when in fact they do not. There are three types of causes of bad breath...

1. Oral,
2. Respiratory and
3. Digestive.

#### **Causes**

Regular cleaning is vital for a healthy mouth and pleasant breath. Without it, bad substances develop in the mouth which cause tooth decay and gum disease and odour.

The most dangerous is Plaque... a sticky coating of food particles, saliva, and bacteria on the teeth. Dental problems such as tooth decay and gum disease can also cause breath problems.

Residual traces of coffee, alcoholic drinks, tobacco smoke, and highly spiced or strong-smelling foods can also contribute to mouth odour. Skipping meals can cause stale breath because eating stimulates saliva flow.

Bad breath can be caused by indigestion, and post-nasal drip. Some diseases cause foul breath, including lung and gastrointestinal ailments, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, tuberculosis, sinusitis. Taking certain drugs, especially some antidepressants, may cause dry mouth and bad breath.

Anyone who has persistent bad breath that doesn't seem related to oral hygiene or temporary indigestion should ask a Doctor about the potential cause.

#### **Traditional Treatment**

Good oral hygiene will take care of most bad breath. Brush and floss your teeth at least twice a day, especially after meals when food particles may be trapped in your mouth. Eliminating strong-smelling food can help reduce the problem, as can stimulating the flow of saliva and drinking plenty of water. Mouthwashes, mints, and chewing gum often only mask the problem.

Plaque build-up is a major cause of bad breath, so have your teeth cleaned by a dental professional regularly. Chronic bad breath should be diagnosed and treated by a doctor or dentist.

#### **Alternative/Natural Treatments**

**Homoeopathy** - If your breath is particularly bad on awakening, after meals, or after drinking alcohol, try Nux vomica or Kali phosphoricum. Both are available over the counter.

**Herbal Therapies** - alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Echinacea (*Echinacea* spp), myrrh (as a gargle). Fenugreek or peppermint tea taken after meals used everyday can help, parsley chewed can also be of benefit. Preparations containing cloves, aniseed, and fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) also are popular.

#### **Personal Care**

- Good oral hygiene
- Clean your tongue as far back as feels comfortable
- Always rinse out your mouth with water after cleaning with toothpaste.

#### **Dietary Considerations**

A high-fibre diet with plenty of whole grains, fresh fruit, and raw, leafy vegetables helps good digestion and reduces the chance of bad breath. Also eating quality yogurts containing acidophilus and bifidus. Eating apples, oranges, and celery can help by cleaning the teeth, dispersing bacteria in the mouth, and stimulating saliva flow.

Try chewing fresh parsley or peppermint leaves, a method used by ancient Romans to sweeten their breath.

Try taking certain supplements such as B Complex, Magnesium, Digestive Enzymes.

#### **When to seek further professional advice**

- the odour is accompanied by inflamed or bleeding gums noticeable after you clean your teeth. These may be signs of tooth decay or gum problems.
- foul breath persists without any obvious cause after brushing and flossing the teeth and cleaning the gums and tongue. You may have an internal condition that requires medical diagnosis and treatment.