

# Health Tips

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### Health Tip: Halitosis.....(bad breath)



problem.

Halitosis comes from the Latin word halitus, meaning breath or exhalation, combined with the Greek suffix, -osis, referring to disease. Despite its ancient language heritage, the word halitosis is said to have been coined by the Listerine Company (of mouthwash fame) in 1921. From time to time, almost everyone has concerns that their breath could be offensive. Unfortunately, many people with bad breath aren't even aware there's a

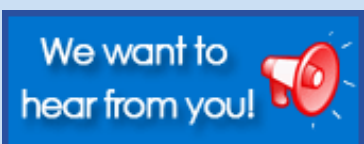
What causes bad breath? The odor itself results from the production of volatile sulfur compounds (VSCs) that are released from the breakdown of sulfur-containing proteins by bacteria in the oral cavity. A number of other factors contribute to the development of halitosis such as:

- Eating foods with a strong odor (garlic or onions).
- Smoking or using smokeless tobacco (snuff or chewing tobacco).
- Bacterial growth in the mouth, particularly on the back of the tongue.
- Dental problems including periodontal disease and plaque buildup.

Another major contributing cause to the development of halitosis is decreased saliva. Saliva has a natural cleaning action that helps reduce bacterial growth. With a decrease in saliva production, bacteria counts increase along with the production of VSCs. Saliva production decreases with dehydration, skipping meals, drinking alcoholic beverages, salivary gland disease (e.g. Sjogren's Syndrome), and taking certain medications.

Is halitosis considered to be a disease? Almost everyone has bad breath from time to time. Bad breath after eating onions, upon arising in the morning, or because of forgetting to brush regularly can be considered to be "normal". Halitosis can also accompany a number of medical conditions including nasal polyps, chronic sinusitis, cryptic tonsils, chronic lung infections, gastroesophageal reflux and liver disease. How can halitosis be treated? The

any other topic or question you have!



following measures can help to treat or prevent bad breath:

- Avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of water.
- Encourage saliva production by chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free candy. Cinnamon-containing gums or candies may even have bacteria fighting properties.
- Brush your teeth after meals and floss at least once a day.
- Clean your tongue with a tongue scraper or a soft bristled toothbrush (it is important to get as far back on the tongue as possible, since that is where the bacteria that cause bad breath tend to grow).
- For temporary improvement, rinse with an antiseptic mouthwash, chew fresh parsley, or let a breath mint dissolve in your mouth.
- Avoid foods, such as garlic or onions.
- Do not skip meals.
- Have regular dental check-ups.
- Do not smoke or use smokeless tobacco products.
- Clean dentures, removable bridges, or orthodontic appliances regularly.



Most bad breath can be managed by careful attention to oral hygiene and remaining well hydrated. When halitosis persists despite attention to these measures, an evaluation looking for possible medical or dental conditions underlying the problem is warranted.

If you or someone in your family would like to know more about halitosis then Sign into your eDocAmerica account, click on the 'Ask eDoc' icon, and send us your questions.

We would love the opportunity to assist you in getting the help you need.

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