

# Bad Breath

## What is it?

Bad breath or unpleasant odour from the mouth is usually caused by bacteria in the mouth. Though it is usually not a sign of general ill health, but there are many reasons that may lead to bad breath.



Gum disease can cause bad breath. But you could still have breath with good oral hygiene, and healthy teeth and gums. The smell then usually comes from the far back of the tongue. It gets stronger when you talk, as your mouth gets drier.

Most adults occasionally suffer from bad breath; perhaps a quarter have it regularly. If you are worried about bad breath,

- Work out whether you really have a bad-breath problem
- Find out the reason for the bad breath, and help you deal with it.

## What can my dentist do?

Make sure, before you see your dentist, that you have not done anything to hide the normal smell of your breath. Do not smoke, chew gum or use a mouth rinse, and avoid any sort of perfume; do not clean your teeth immediately before your appointment.

Your dentist might use a plastic spoon like instrument to gently scrape the back of your tongue, to test it for odour causing bacteria. There are also instruments that measure sulphur compounds in the mouth or swelling around the gums.

Better oral hygiene is usually the answer to a bad-breath problem. The dentist or the hygienist can demonstrate the proper way to brush and floss your teeth at home.

## What can I do myself?

- Brush your teeth thoroughly twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Use floss or other oral hygiene aids if your dentist or hygienist recommends them. You can check bad breath by smelling the floss after you have used it. If there is a smell from a particular part of the mouth, clean that area with special care.
- Gently brush your tongue if it is heavily coated. Special plastic tongue scrapers can be bought from chemists.

A mouth will smell less if it is moist. Chewing sugar-free gum can help with bad breath by increasing the flow of saliva. You might have a dry mouth because you breathe with your mouth open or because you are taking certain medicines.

If you smoke, try to give up. As well as making your breath smell better, giving up smoking will keep your mouth and gums healthy, and benefits your general health.