

Fresher Breath For The Festive Season

Many people may think that bad breath can be caused only by poor oral hygiene and dental diseases. Some dentists may even suspect psychological problems when faced with a patient having perfect oral hygiene and yet complaining about bad breath woes. The fact is, although it is true that dental diseases like gum infections and decay do contribute greatly to a person's breath problems, there are many other factors that may also contribute to bad breath.

Causes of bad breath

When we smell someone's bad breath, we are actually smelling a group of chemicals known as the Volatile Sulphur Compounds releasing from his or her mouth. Some people described such odour to the likes of garbage, old gym socks or even dirty fish tank. These Sulphur compounds are being produced by a group of bacteria in our mouth known as anaerobic bacteria. The word Anaerobic means, these bacteria will thrive in a situation when there is no oxygen and in the presence of oxygen, they die.

By knowing such fact, we will appreciate the importance of our Saliva to combat bad breath. Saliva is made up of 99% water. And water is a compound of Hydrogen and Oxygen. Hence, presence of saliva will provide the source of oxygen to suppress the growth of these anaerobic bacteria. Take a look at babies, they have no bad breath as they are always drooling.

Similarly, the absence of saliva will deplete the mouth of oxygen and provides great opportunities for the anaerobic bacteria to multiply faster and release huge amount of volatile sulphur compounds causing bad breath.

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth is a condition to describe a situation where the mouth is lacking in salivary flow. This could be due to physiological aging of the body, causing

salivary gland to produce lesser saliva, or from other medical conditions. One of the most common causes of dry mouth is from the side effects of numerous medications such as those used to treat diabetes, depression and antihypertensive etc. During sleep, the saliva production is also reduced leading to dry mouth in the morning when one wakes up having bad breath known as "morning breath". Besides brushing teeth in the morning, one tip of overcoming morning breath is not to skip breakfast. Eating breakfast helps to stimulate salivary flow, hence helping to freshen up the breath.

As alcohol is a natural drying agent, by drinking alcohol or using mouth rinse containing alcohol may also cause dry mouth and increase the risk of bad breath. Smoking is another habit that will dry up the mouth instantly.

Food Causing Bad Breath

There is also such condition known as situational bad breath, where bad breath problem can persists and last for a few hours or more, usually due to certain habits or food that we eat. Food like Onions and Garlic are naturally high in their contents of sulphur compounds and can cause situational bad breath after eating them. Anaerobic bacteria have also been shown to multiply quickly in an acidic environment. Acidic beverages like orange juice and coffee will increase the reproduction of such



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bacteria leading to situational bad breath. Dairy products can also cause bad breath in people with Lactose Intolerance.

Bad Breath Remedies

People with bad breath problems should first visit the dentist. Get their oral health checked and find out if the problem of bad breath is of dental origin. Some clinics may be equipped with a machine known as the Halimeter that can measure the presence and severity of bad breath. If there are underlying dental problems, they should first be treated.

To battle bad breath problems that are not due to underlying dental diseases, or to just keep your breath fresh throughout the day, a range of dental products containing strong and stable oxygenating agents can be of great help. These oxygenating agents not only suppress the growth of the anaerobic bacteria, but will also neutralize the existing sulphur compounds that are present. All these oxygenating mouth rinse and spray will also come in handy after consuming high sulphur containing food like durians and curries. Using these products after eating those foods will help to remove those offensive odour quickly and builds confidence for you to move on to the next meeting. Another tip of course, is to drink more water and hydrate yourself though out the day.