



# Bad breath

Bad breath (halitosis) is a social concern. It can be a health issue, too.



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- A bad odor from the mouth. To detect this, wipe the back of your tongue with a piece of white, sterile gauze. After 5 minutes, smell the gauze for an odor.
- An unpleasant taste is in the mouth.
- You are told you have bad breath.

## CAUSES

Bacteria on the tongue, dry mouth, and strong odors of food, such as garlic and onions, are common causes of bad breath. Other causes are smoking, alcohol, ill-fitting dentures, and infections of the gums or teeth. Less often, bad breath is due to another problem, such as a sinus infection or indigestion.

## TREATMENT

The Self-Care/Prevention items listed on this page treat most cases of bad breath. If not, your dentist can prescribe:

- A special toothpaste
- A mouth rinse
- A special brush
- A tongue scraper
- An antimicrobial solution



## TRIAGE QUESTIONS

With bad breath, do you have any of these problems?

- Bleeding, swelling, or pain in the mouth or throat
- Chronic cough
- Digestion problems. Weight loss.
- Puffy, reddened gums

**NO**  
↓

**YES** ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Does bad breath continue after you use self-care for 2 weeks?

**NO**  
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**YES** ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



**USE SELF-CARE**



## SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

- Brush twice a day and clean between your teeth daily with floss.
- After meals, rinse your mouth with water, or chew parsley, mint leaves, celery, or carrots.
- If you wear dentures, clean and care for them as advised by your dentist.
- Use over-the-counter mouthwashes but be aware they are only a temporary solution.
- Don't smoke.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- To prevent dry mouth, drink plenty of water and other liquids.
- Eat nutritious foods. Limit sugary foods.
- Chew sugarless gum or suck on lemon or other citrus drops. These help make saliva. Saliva helps deal with bacteria on the teeth and washes away food particles.