

Fresh Breath and How to Get It

Bad breath afflicts an estimated 40 million people in the United States. Are you one of those 40 million? To find out, take one or more of these simple "breath tests."

Test #1: Wipe the top surface of your tongue with a piece of cotton gauze or Q-Tip and smell that. If you detect an odor and if you notice a yellowish stain on the cotton, it's likely that you have an elevated sulfide production level (more information on sulfide and sulfur compounds after the tests).

Test #2: Lick the back of your hand and let that dry for about 10 seconds. Smell. If you notice an unpleasant smell, it is because the sulfur salts from your tongue are on your hand.

Test #3: Run a piece of dental floss between your back teeth (especially where you may get food caught) and then smell the floss. If it smells, so may your breath.

Test #4: Stand in front of the mirror and stick your tongue out as far as possible. If you notice that the very back of your tongue is coated or discolored, it may be a sign that you have bad breath.

Test #5: - The Honest Truth Test: Do you have a friend or loved one who would be up front and tell you that your breath was less than pleasant? Ask him/her to check your breath and give their opinion.

What do you know about your breath?

Bad breath is called "halitosis". Most people won't tell you if you have bad breath.

Transitory bad breath, such as garlic breath, may last up to 2 or 3 days. Chronic bad breath is different. It does not improve over time and is the result of odor-causing bacteria in the mouth and on the tongue. Odor-causing bacteria in the mouth produce volatile sulfur compounds that smell bad.

Why most over-the counter products don't help bad breath! (Despite what their advertising says!)

The over-the-counter products that I'm talking about include mouth rinse, mints, mouth spray, and gum.

Why aren't they effective? Most traditional products only mask the bad breath, like "perfume" for the mouth, without killing the bacteria or eliminating the volatile sulfur compounds. They only last as long as the smell of the mouth rinse (minutes rather than hours).

Many mouth rinses have high alcohol content. Listerine is 27% alcohol while Scope has 14% alcohol. The alcohol in these products dries the mouth, ultimately increasing the formation of odor-causing bacteria.

Alcohol in the mouth rinse equals more bacteria and more bad breath.

How can you best manage chronic bad breath?

1) Eliminate gum disease. If you have plaque and tartar on your teeth or under your gums, your mouth is a happy home for enormous amounts of odor-causing bacteria.

2) Practice good oral hygiene. Not only brushing and flossing daily, but using a tongue scraper to remove debris (and bacteria) off the top of your tongue.

3) Use a sulfur-compound eliminating mouth rinse that really fights bad breath and contains a product

that helps prevent the production of volatile sulfur compounds. Your dentist can supply you with newer products that are specifically designed to manage chronic bad breath. These products are not available at the drug-store or market. In our office these products include a mouthrinse, toothpaste, breath spray, gum, mints, and others, that do the following:

- Kill odor-causing bacteria.
- Bind and eliminate volatile sulfur compounds (bad odor).
- Create fresh breath without alcohol, so odor-causing bacteria do not come back as fast.
- Provide long-lasting fresh breath.

These products work very well and are simple to use.

Although ninety percent of bad breath comes from the mouth and can be managed, other medical factors can also contribute to halitosis. These include a variety of medications that cause dry mouth and medical conditions such as diabetes and sinusitis. If bad breath persists with proper breath management, your dentist should refer you to your physician regarding possible underlying medical conditions that may be causing the bad breath.



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"Breath RX is a line of products that both kills odor-causing bacteria and eliminates the sulfur compounds that cause bad breath. Breath RX is only available through dental offices."