

Bad Breath is Manageable

Question: “Dr. Arnold, I have persistent bad breath, and I’m very self-conscious about it. What can I do about this problem?”

Answer: You are certainly not alone because halitosis (bad breath) is a problem for *many* people. Bad breath is often caused by VSC’s, or volatile sulfur compounds. These odiferous compounds are a result of the breakdown (by bacteria) of many sulfur-containing foods. Additionally, some foods such as onions and garlic, are absorbed into the bloodstream and transferred to the lungs. Exhalation can be unpleasantly aromatic. Dietary modification can improve this condition, as can drinking more water.

Maintaining exceptional oral hygiene is probably the most effective way to control bad breath. This begins with thorough brushing after every meal, flossing at least once per day, thorough cleaning of the tongue, and regular dental visits. Unfortunately, when food particles remain in the mouth bacteria accumulates, and this could also lead to periodontal (gum and bone) disease and bad breath.

Many mouthwashes with alcohol simply *mask* the odor temporarily and can actually exacerbate the problem. Therefore, look for alcohol-free products which will help neutralize the acidity of the mouth, slow down bacterial reproduction, and decrease VSC’s. This eliminates the cause of malodor at the source and can improve one’s breath for several hours. Fortunately, several such products exist and can be purchased online or from your dentist.

If all of the above methods are utilized without positive results, you may have a medical condition that requires attention from a physician. Sometimes gastric reflux, chronic sinusitis, or diabetes can lend themselves to bad breath. You should consult with your dentist and/or physician to figure out the cause of your halitosis so that it can be addressed appropriately.

The opinions expressed solely are those of the writer. This column is intended for informational purposes only. Readers should seek specific advice from their own dentist. Dr. Arnold can be reached at drarnold@smilesbyarnold.com or 1830 S. 11th St., Chesterton, IN 46304. You may also visit his Web site at www.SmilesByArnold.com.