

BREATH MYTHS

"Bad breath" is a very common problem yet most people do not know they have it. Our sense of smell get accustomed to our own odors, body and mouth, yet we can pick up on other peoples odors quickly. Coffee-breath, smokers-breath, and garlic and onion breath is usually not noticed by the "offender". The new high protein, low carb-diets create a unique breath odor as well.

Many think that they can check their own breath by cupping their hands over their nose and mouth, or by licking and smelling their wrists. Our noses have already adjusted to the odors so do not pick up on the true essence others may notice. Many odors come from our lungs, throat, tongue, from under the gumline, and between teeth. The best way to tell is to ask a trusted friend or loved one. Grandchildren are great at pointing out problems without hesitation. Bad breath detectors are available for a reasonable price.

Most mouthwashes and breath mints only last about ten minutes and can cause cavities if they contain sugar. Some alcohol type mouthwashes can dry the mouth and increase odors, but there are alcohol free types available. "Morning breath" is an example of odors caused by a dry mouth. Beginning each day with a quick swish of Listerine Coolmint, or a generic with the same ingredients, will reduce odors as well as the bacteria that can cause them.

Prescription and special order mouthwashes and toothpastes that contain *chlorine dioxide* reduce the "volatile sulfur compounds" (VSC's) that cause a common type of chronic bad breath. They are often a little more expensive than regular toothpaste but it can be well worth it if you have concerns, or a job where you may work closely with people. After using it for a short time it can be used less frequently to control odors. Sugar in breath mints and chewing gum feed bacteria which causes cavities and more bad breath.

Good oral hygiene each day is very important to reduce breath odors, but may not be enough. The tongue should be cleaned with a smooth surfaced tongue cleaner or lightly with your toothbrush at the end of a brushing. The source may not be your mouth so check with your dental team and see what they recommend. Sometimes a medical problem, like diabetes, a fungal infection, cavities, or gum disease could be the problem.

Some products that can be recommended are as follows: *Listerine Coolmint*, *FreshBurst*, *VanillaMint*, or the new *Citrus* flavored rinse, *Listerine Pocket Paks*, a toothpaste with baking soda and peroxide (*ProxiCare*, *Mentadent*, *Crest Whitening*, etc.), *Biotene* products moisten the mouth, and *CloSys*, available from your dental office, helps with serious problems. Being seen at least every six months for a thorough cleaning by your hygienist will also help.

Elimination of garlic, onions, tobacco, and coffee will do wonders for breath. If you choose to consume those types of things then keeping your distance may be a simple solution.