

## **Bad Breath**

Be Well, Massage Magazine

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### Introduction

No one appears to be immune to having bad breath one time or another, however the halitosis we will be discussing goes beyond the garlic breath you get following a spicy Italian meal. Bad breath can mean a problem with your digestion, gum disease, point to an allergy, an acidic system, low immunity or more often than anything else – inadequate oral hygiene or bacterial overgrowth. There is evidence that a significant percentage of bad breath is caused by the anaerobic bacteria sealed by mucous in the folds of the soft tissues of the mouth (gums, cheeks, tongue) where dead cells, blood elements and food debris often reside. When these microbes decompose the protein in these substances, they putrefy and form two noxious gases called hydrogen sulfide and methyl mercaptan, the notorious culprits of common halitosis.

According to Ayurvedic and Oriental Medicine, breath odor is a key diagnosing tool for determining a patient's state of health. Conditions such as diabetes and kidney-related problems as well as digestive difficulties can cause a change in your breath. For example, a urine-like or uric acid odor often relates to poorly functioning kidneys while sugary-sweet breath may suggest a pre-diabetic condition. Because there is such a strong correlation between the breath odor and specific illnesses, highly sophisticated equipment is being developed and put into practice by alternative health practitioners and

researchers utilizing your breath. The “breath analysis” machine is used to diagnose such illnesses as diabetes, cirrhosis of the liver, stomach ulcers, lung cancers, and other diseases known to produce significant changes in breath odor. More and more doctors are becoming aware that the mouth is a very important indicator of overall health.

### Holistic Solutions

Another important practice borrowed from Ayurveda, is tongue brushing. This involves the twice daily routine of using a flat stainless steel or plastic instrument to scrape the paste-like coating from the back and top of the tongue. It is believed that the tongue collects a coating of toxins and metabolic waste, especially after a nights rest when many toxins are eliminated. Alternatively, the tongue can also be brushed gently with a toothbrush or scraped with dental floss, to remove the bacterial-laden plaque. If you are fasting or on a detoxification program, you may notice more of this material on your tongue along with an offensive breath odor due to the cleansing.

An easy to prepare and very effective mouthwash is all you need for the occasional bad breath, and when used daily following tongue brushing, will aid in prevention and excellent oral hygiene. Peppermint essential oil is best known for its beneficial effect on the digestive system, and most notably for bad breath. It is not coincidental that many oral care products, including mouthwashes, breath sprays, toothpaste, tooth picks, dental floss and after dinner mints incorporate mint flavorings! In addition to peppermint essential oil, others that aid with digestion and known to have

anti-bacterial properties are your best options for this problem and include Spearmint, Anise, Nutmeg, and Rosemary.

When it is inconvenient to brush, rinsing after meals with a natural mouthwash (or even water) is the next best thing for good oral hygiene. Here is a recipe for morning breath and general oral care to prevent bad breath since these oils are antibacterial and will leave your mouth with a tingle of freshness.

#### Herbal Fresh Mouthwash

1 cup warm water

1 tsp. raw honey

2 drops Peppermint essential oil

2 drops Spearmint essential oil

1 drop Anise essential oil

1 tsp. fresh lemon juice (optional, balances pH)

Measure out honey and essential oil drops into a measuring cup. Mix well and then stir in the warm water. Add the lemon juice and stir well. Bottle and label. Shake well before each use and swish for 30 to 60 seconds. For optimal freshness make weekly or double this recipe and store in the refrigerator.

There are many safe and popular herbs and spices that have been traditionally used to combat digestive and oral care problems. A dozen common breath fresheners are listed here: anise, basil, cardamom, cinnamon, clove, coriander, fennel, ginger,

peppermint, rosemary, sage and spearmint. These can be made into an herbal infusion (tea) for a simple mouth rinse, replaced for the water in the mouthwash recipe given above, and simply incorporated into your diet. Also chlorophyll, chlorella and fresh wheat grass juice are very effective breath pleasers as well. Herbs such as goldenseal, prickly ash bark, turmeric, echinacea, calendula, and cinchona bark are healing and enhance oral health. You may find some of these herbs in the natural, holistic mouthwashes and tooth products on the market. Other natural ingredients are aloe vera, bee propolis, sesame oil and wheat germ oil.

Fresh lemon juice is helpful with neutralizing acids and overall detoxification and is a powerful antibacterial agent. It is optional in the mouthwash recipe, yet can be very helpful for those of you who may suffer from a high acid system. If you smoke, drink alcohol, eat animal proteins, have several cups of coffee per day, or are under considerable stress, you will benefit from the addition of lemon juice to aid in excellent oral health since it aids in balancing your body's pH.

### Conclusion

To keep your breath smelling minty-fresh remember to routinely rinse after meals, either with natural mouthwash or water, practice brushing your tongue daily, and incorporate more of the digestive herbs and spices into your diet. And remember it's wise not to ignore bad breath, and shrug it off as annoying, embarrassing, or simply insignificant. It could be an early warning sign of an underlying health problem that may

not only get between you and that special someone - but could prevent that person from becoming truly healthy.