

Bad Breath Statistics

It's reported that between 14 and 25 percent of Americans and 35 to 45 percent of the entire world's population have chronic bad breath . . . and you can assume that at least 99% of everyone else has "dragon breath" in the morning.

Estimates of the amount of money spent in the United States to combat bad breath are staggering: Americans, surveys claim, pay approximately \$10 billion every year for breath mints, mouthwashes and rinses, gum, pills, toothpastes and a myriad of other products and treatments sold in stores and over the Internet. The sad thing is that many of these purchased items are completely ineffective, others just mask the problem they claim they will resolve, and a few others just make the problem worse.

An example of a commonly used product that masks bad breath for a short period and actually contributes to the problem is an alcohol based mouthwash. The net effect of an alcohol-based mouthwash on your breath is negative -- the alcohol is drying out your mouth and creating a great breeding ground for the kind of bacteria that contributes most to bad breath. A relatively new ingredient in some mouthwashes is "chlorine dioxide" or "stabilized chlorine dioxide." Reportedly, mouthwashes with chlorine dioxide or stabilized chlorine dioxide actually attack that sulfurous, "rotten egg" smell that oral bacteria leaves behind and won't dry out your mouth. It sounds like this is a product that might actually be worth the money spent on it.

Chronic bad breath: Chronic (persistent) bad breath is most often caused by poor oral hygiene -- exceptions to this are breath problems caused by gum disease, certain illnesses, some medications, a regular diet of foods with a high sulfur content (e.g., onions, garlic, pastrami, cabbage and others), a low-carbohydrate diet, regular tobacco use and an excessive alcohol intake.

Halitosis in adults and children: Halitosis in children is caused by the same things that cause halitosis in adults: possible medical conditions, diet or poor oral hygiene. Up to 85% of the time oral hygiene is not only the source but the key to the resolution of bad breath.

Most dentists recommend the following good oral hygiene practices to prevent bad breath and gum disease:

Brush your teeth (and along your gum line) at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.

Each time you brush, use your toothbrush or a tongue scraper to clean the top surface of your tongue.

Use dental floss to remove food particles from between your teeth at least once a day.

Use an antiseptic mouthwash after each brushing, swish it around in your mouth for about 30 seconds before spitting it out.

If you wear dentures, take them out at night, brush them and leave them to soak overnight in a disinfecting solution.

If you wear removable braces, retainers or partials, take them out to clean them at the interval recommended by your dentist.

Visit your dentist twice a year for a dental checkup and to have your teeth professionally cleaned.

Morning breath: Morning breath is simply caused by a lack of saliva. While we sleep, our bodies shut down most, if not all, saliva production by the salivary glands. Saliva helps kill the bacteria in the mouth that causes bad breath, so when the saliva supply is cut off the bacteria thrives. There are some "morning breath eliminator" products on the market that promise to keep working while you sleep so you wake up with fresh breath -- you'll need to try them to see if they work for you.

Medical conditions that cause bad breath: Certain medical conditions will cause breath odor. The listing of medical conditions below is not intended to be an all-inclusive list. If you believe that your breath odor problem is being caused by something outside of your diet or your oral hygiene habits, see a medical professional immediately.

Acidosis

Appendicitis

Bronchiectasis

Sinusitis

Diabetes

Esophageal problems

Gastroesophageal Reflux
Gingivitis
Gum disease
Kidney failure
Periodontitis
Pharyngitis
Postnasal drip
Stomatitis
Tooth abscess
Vincent's disease
Zenker's diverticulum

Medications that cause bad breath: Certain prescription medications, as well as some over-the-counter medications will cause a breath odor. The following list of medicines is not intended to be an all inclusive list nor does it suggest that all users of these medications will exhibit bad breath. Medicines work differently on each individual.

Any drugs that reduce salivation
Antihistamines
Certain sinus drugs
Some antidepressants
Paraldehyde
Disulfiram

IMPORTANT NOTE: If a prescription medication is causing you to have a breath problem, DO NOT stop taking the medication without consulting with your doctor. A breath odor problem is not life-threatening. If, however, you stop taking a prescribed medication you may be damaging your health.

About the Author

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