



Do people take a step back when you're speaking? Do friends, family and coworkers constantly offer you gum or breath mints? If so, you could be suffering from chronic bad breath—halitosis—and not even know it!

CAUSES OF BAD BREATH

Bad breath is commonly caused by the millions of bacteria that live in the mouth, especially on the tongue and gums. In addition, the following can also cause bad breath:

- Certain foods and drinks, such as garlic, coffee or onions
- Lack of or improper brushing and flossing: food particles remain in the mouth and decay, producing odor
- Dry mouth caused by medications, salivary gland problems, breathing from the mouth or even dieting; saliva is necessary to cleanse the mouth of food particles and bacteria that cause odor
- Tobacco products
- Periodontal (gum) disease
- Medical conditions: diabetes; kidney, liver, lung, sinus or reflux disease

Most types of periodic bad breath aren't cause for concern, but for persistent bad breath, there could be an underlying oral or medical cause.

BUSTING BAD BREATH

Maintaining good oral care is often all it takes to keep odor-causing bacteria at bay. Be sure to brush your teeth, cheeks, tongue and gums and floss to remove particles between the teeth. Chew sugar-free gum and drink plenty of water to maintain saliva that naturally rinses the mouth.

Also, talk to your dentist if you think you have bad breath. Regular dental checkups will remove the buildup of plaque and bacteria that causes odor and also help determine the source of bad breath. Bad breath resulting from a medical illness like chronic sinusitis could require long-term care. But for many, proper oral hygiene or treatment of periodontal disease can begin to cure bad breath almost immediately.

For information on the TRICARE Dental Program, or to find more "Dental Health 101" tips, visit us online at www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com.