

Rat Breath!

There's nothing worse than halitosis is there? You usually know if you've got it (some people don't), and boy, do you know if someone else has! There are lots of causes, so let's look at a few.

It can be as close as your mouth. The cause could be on your tongue, as bacteria metabolise sulphur on top of your tongue to make hydrogen sulphide and methyl mercaptan. Poor oral hygiene, infected teeth, or bacteria beneath the gums can pong. Frequent cleaning and a regular trip to the dentist is essential for good health, because some oral bacteria can cause serious heart disease. Get those teeth cleaned up regularly, and avoid amalgam fillings, as the mercury is toxic. Smoking is yet another obvious cause of bad breath.

It could come from a bit further down though. A serious lung disease or infection can give you doggy breath, as the bacteria break down or respire. Even sinusitis can make you a bit whiffy, but you may not be able to smell it yourself, and lung or sinus infections smell quite different from oral or gut problems.

Low stomach acidity is another problem in all sorts of ways. This is more common as we age, and the odour comes from food which is incompletely broken down, and other problems (check for bloating, farting, burping). This needs treatment, as our stomach acid is part of our immune defence, not to mention a crucial part of our digestion, particularly of proteins. Allergies can also result.

It could be further down still, though. Bad bacteria in the gut can result from long-term antibiotic use, dysentery, peptic ulcers, gastric upsets and poor diet. It's extremely common. I'm often asked if those little plastic bottles of probiotic liquids from the supermarket help. They can a bit, but they also contain lots of sugar, and that can feed bad bacteria, so there are better solutions.

So, if you have halitosis, you need to go to your dentist, stop smoking, make sure your stomach acid levels are good, get rid of any respiratory infections, and take some probiotics to crowd out the bad bacteria and colonise the good. Taking any probiotics can help, but therapeutic strains in practitioner products give the best value and results. Book a consultation soon.

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[Advice in these columns is of a general nature only and is not to be taken as specific treatment.]