

HALITOSIS (BAD BREATH)

Halitosis can cause embarrassment, anxiety and insecurity. Even patients with little or no halitosis, who believe otherwise, worry about the condition. Conversely, there are those with severe halitosis who are not aware of or ignore its existence.



Dr Lau Chee Chong

*Ear, Nose & Throat –
Head & Neck Surgeon*

Ear, Nose & Throat Centre CC Lau

3 Mount Elizabeth
#14-11 Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre
Singapore 228510
Tel: 6235 9535
www.entcentreccclau.com.sg

How to know if you have halitosis

- Breathe out forcefully through your mouth into a cupped hand and inhale through your nose immediately.
- Scrape the surface of your entire tongue from back to front with a spoon. Allow it to dry, then smell it.
- Ask a relative or close friend to tell you honestly.

Causes

A. Infection or inflammation

- Chronic tonsillitis with bits of white or yellow tonsillar debris ('stones')
- Chronic sinusitis and rhinitis
- Poor dental hygiene
- Laryngopharyngeal reflux
- Bronchitis

B. Dry mouth

Saliva helps clean and flush the mouth of food and other particles. Saliva maintains a balance of healthy bacterial flora in the mouth. Causes of dry mouth:

- Blocked nose due to deviated nasal septum, polyps, tumors, or enlarged turbinates, adenoids or tonsils
- Reduced saliva production, resulting from disease of salivary glands, insufficient water intake, medication, antihistamines, decongestants or diuretics
- Cancer of the nose, oral cavity or larynx, especially after surgery and radiation therapy
- 'Morning breath' is a common cause due to reduced salivation during sleep, particularly in mouth-breathers and if one fails to maintain proper oral cleaning before sleeping, thus allowing oral bacteria to flourish

C. Diet

- Consumption of odorous food items, such as onion, garlic or curry.

D. General health diseases

- Pneumonia, diabetes, and diseases of the liver and kidney can be causes.

E. Smoking

- Smoking causes dry mouth, altering the balance of healthy bacterial flora.

Signs and symptoms

- Dry and abnormal taste in mouth
- Coating on tongue

- Inflamed tonsils with 'stones'
- Poor dental hygiene

Self treatment

Before seeing a specialist, try these steps first:

- Keep mouth moist at all times
- Drink adequate amounts of plain water
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables (apples, carrots, etc)
- Chew sugarless dental chewing gum
- Regularly floss and brush teeth and clean oral appliances
- Use mouthwash
- Avoid halitosis-causing foods
- Use a chinstrap to prevent mouth-breathing during sleep
- Don't smoke

If these steps fail to counter the condition, consult an ENT specialist. Treatment depends on the cause. Your ENT specialist will identify the cause and treat it accordingly. 

