

## **Revive Dental Care Information Sheet**

### **All About Bad Breath**

Let's face it, bad breath or Halitosis as it is also known, is a big social no-no. So at Revive Dental Care, we've put together this short guide to help everyone avoid bad breath.

#### **So, how can I tell if I have bad breath?**

Lots of small signals can indicate that you have bad breath. Have you noticed people stepping away when you start to talk? Do people turn their cheek when you kiss them goodbye?

If you think you might have bad breath, there is a simple test that you can do. Simply lick the inside of your wrist and sniff – if the smell is bad, you can be pretty sure that your breath is too.

Or, ask a very good friend to be absolutely honest, but do make sure they are a true friend!

#### **What causes bad breath?**

Bad breath is a very common problem and there are many different causes.

Persistent bad breath is usually caused by the smelly gases released by the bacteria that coat your teeth and gums.

Bits of food that get caught between the teeth and on the tongue will decay and can sometimes cause an unpleasant smell. So correct and regular brushing is very important to keep your breath smelling fresh.

However, strong foods like garlic, coffee and onions can add to the problem.

The bacteria on our teeth and gums (plaque) also cause gum disease and dental decay. One of the warning signs of gum disease is that you always have bad breath or a bad taste in your mouth. Again, your dentist or hygienist will be able to see and treat the problem during your regular check-ups. The earlier the problems are found, the more effective the treatment will be.

#### **Does anything else cause bad breath?**

Bad breath can also be caused by some medical problems. Dry mouth (xerostomia) is a condition that affects the flow of saliva. This causes bacteria to build up in the mouth and this leads to bad breath.

Dry mouth may be caused by some medicines, salivary gland problems or by continually breathing through the mouth instead of the nose. Older people may produce less saliva, causing further problems.

If you suffer from dry mouth, your dentist may be able to recommend or prescribe an artificial saliva product. Or your dentist may be able to suggest other ways of dealing with the problem.

### **Can other medical conditions cause bad breath?**

Yes. Other medical conditions that cause bad breath include infections in the throat, nose or lungs; sinusitis; bronchitis; diabetes; or liver or kidney problems. If your dentist finds that your mouth is healthy, you may be referred to your family GP or a specialist to find out the cause of your bad breath.

### **Can smoking cause bad breath?**

Yes it can, because tobacco causes its own form of bad breath. The only solution in this case is to stop smoking. As well as making your breath smell, smoking causes staining, causes loss of taste and irritates the gums. People who smoke are more likely to suffer from gum disease and also have a greater risk of developing cancer of the mouth, lung cancer and heart disease.

Ask your dentist, pharmacist or practice nurse for help in quitting. If you do stop smoking, but still have bad breath, then you need to see your dentist or GP for advice.

### **How can my dentist help?**

Well if you do have bad breath, you will need to start a routine for keeping your mouth clean and fresh. Your dentist will advise you about this.

Regular check-ups will allow your dentist to watch out for any areas where plaque is caught between your teeth. Your dentist or hygienist will be able to clean all those areas that are difficult to reach. They will also be able to show you the best way to clean your teeth and gums, and show you any areas you may be missing, including your tongue.

### **Can I prevent bad breath?**

Yes! To keep your breath fresh, you must get rid of any gum disease and tooth decay, and keep your mouth clean and fresh. If you do have bad breath, try keeping a diary of all the foods you eat and list any medicines you are taking. Take this diary to your dentist who may be able to suggest ways to solve the problem.

Brush your teeth and gums for two minutes, twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Children up to three years old should use a toothpaste with a fluoride level of at least 1000ppm (parts per million). Three-year-olds to adults should use a toothpaste that contains 1350ppm to 1500ppm of fluoride.

Don't forget to clean your tongue as well.

Cut down on how often you have sugary food and drinks.

Visit your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.

Clean between your teeth, as brushing alone only cleans up to about 60 percent of the surface of your teeth. There are products you can buy to clean between your teeth called 'interdental brushes'.

Use a mouthwash – some contain antibacterial agents that could kill bacteria that make your breath smell unpleasant. BUT if you continue to suffer from bad breath visit your dentist or hygienist to make sure that the mouthwash is not masking a more serious underlying problem.

Chew sugar-free gum – it stimulates saliva and stops your mouth drying out. A dry mouth can lead to bad breath.

### **Will mouthwash help?**

Most mouthwashes only disguise bad breath for a short time. So if you find that you are using a mouthwash all the time, talk to your dentist. Some mouthwashes that are recommended for gum disease can cause tooth staining if you use them for a long time. It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions or ask your dentist about how to use them.

### **How can I prevent bad breath if I wear dentures?**

Take them out at night to give your mouth a chance to rest and clean them twice a day. Clean them thoroughly with soap and lukewarm water, a denture cream or a denture-cleaning tablet.

Use a denture brush kept just for the purpose. Remember to clean the surfaces that fit against your gums and palate. This will make sure your dentures are always fresh and clean, and avoid the plaque build-up on the denture that may cause bad breath.

### **How do I tell someone they have bad breath?**

The chances are we all know someone who has bad breath, but very few people feel brave enough to discuss the problem. It is obviously a very delicate matter to tell someone they have bad breath.

There is always the risk that they will be offended or embarrassed and may never speak to you again! However, bad breath may be the result of any number of problems. Once the person knows they have bad breath, they can deal with whatever is causing it.

You could try talking to their partner or a family member, as the bad breath may be caused by a medical condition which is already being treated.

You may like to leave this information sheet where the person in question is likely to see it.

Or you could try a more subtle approach, for instance asking if the person went out for a curry last night?!