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ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM BAD BREATH?

Bad breath is an embarrassing problem, as TV advertisements for mouthwashes continually remind us. Bad breath is not a disease, but a symptom of an underlying problem. Once that problem is fixed, the bad breath disappears.

The most obvious cause of bad breath is poor oral hygiene. Plaque build-up and bacterial decomposition of food particles lodged between the teeth can lead to bad breath as well as gingivitis (gum disease). Regular tooth brushing and flossing, as well as brushing the tongue, can lower bacteria counts and combat bad breath. Mouth washes containing thymol (from thyme) and eukalyptol (from eucalyptus) volatile oils, are proven to fight bacteria.

A reduced saliva flow, or dry mouth, increases the concentration of bacteria in the mouth and worsens bad breath. One of the most common causes of dry mouth is medication such as antihistamines, antidepressants, and diuretics. Also, chronic mouth breathing, radiation therapy, and dehydration can contribute to dry mouth. To increase saliva production, chew sugarless gum (sweetened with xylitol or stevia) and drink adequate amounts of water. I often suggest to patients to increase water intake to two to three litres a day. Avoiding alcohol (ironically found in many commercial mouthwashes) may also help increase saliva production, because alcohol is drying to the mouth.

From a naturopathic doctor's perspective, bad breath is a sign of a disturbed digestive system. It can be indicative of bowel toxemia in either the small or large intestine with an overgrowth of bacteria or yeast. Stomach problems, such as improper food digestion, deficiency of stomach acid and enzymes, constipation, or improper elimination of toxins through the liver and kidneys can contribute. Detoxification diets that remove all chemicals, additives and substances such as alcohol, caffeine, and cigarettes, from the diet and promote plenty of fiber from whole grains, fruits and vegetables are an effective treatment for bad breath. I also recommend certain vitamins and supplements such as acidophilus to compete against any yeast or bacteria build-up in the intestine. Also, greens powders containing chlorophyll can help eliminate bad breath. Liver detoxification herbs, such as milk thistle and dandelion, and vitamins promoting liver detoxification are also recommended.

Stop dealing with bad breath. Consult your naturopathic physician for an individualized treatment plan!