



# Bad Breath in Children

## Wondering why your kid has bad breath?

### Hello Halitosis

Halitosis, the clinical term for bad breath is pretty common in adults - about one in four adults struggle with bad breath. Though this condition is not one many automatically associate with children, halitosis can be common for kids, too.

Just as with adults, there are many reasons why a child may have bad breath:

### Food

We have all likely been concerned about our own onion or garlic breath at one point or another. It is no different for children. If you are lucky enough to have a child who enjoys a variety of vegetables and spices, you will likely find that their breath reflects their diet.

Also, a diet full of junk foods and candies have been known to cause bad breath, as the foods are often rich in carbohydrates or may be sticky, getting caught between the teeth. This trapped, carb-rich food is a favorite for bacteria, multiplying as they consume the leftovers and causing a stink.

### Poor Oral Hygiene

The most common cause for bad breath in both children and adults is poor oral hygiene. The bacteria that likes to feast on the leftover food between our teeth multiply and turns into a sticky substance called plaque. This plaque will eat away at tooth enamel causing tooth decay or will harden to become tartar and contribute to gum disease. The bacteria can release a foul odor, so the best prevention is to brush properly at least twice a day to remove the leftover food particles and plaque build-up.

Proper brushing technique can be difficult for younger children to master and try the patience of older children who prefer to be playing video games; however, proper brushing technique must be used in order to remove all of the built up bacteria.

### Dry Mouth

Dry mouth can occur due to a variety of reasons, but most commonly from mouth breathing or medications. Dry mouth is a decrease in the production of saliva, which washes stinky bacteria away. Mouth breathing is common when children are stuffed-up with a cold or allergies, but it does dry out the mouth. Ironically, certain medications like antihistamines can also cause dry mouth, resulting in an overabundance of odor-causing bacteria.



### Treating Bad Breath

Once you are able to determine the cause for your child's bad breath, you can take steps to help improve it. Without making fun or passing judgement, explain to your child that you have noticed their breath, ask questions to determine the cause, and take steps to improve it. It could just be a matter of slight diet changes, giving suggestions on changing sleeping position, providing some water at nighttime, or in the event of sinus infection, seeking treatment.

Regardless, your child should maintain a healthy oral hygiene routine and be taken to the dentist at least every 6 months for routine exams and cleanings. The professional removal of plaque and tartar will most likely improve their breath immediately; however, if you are unable to determine the cause or improve your child's bad breath, discuss it with the dentist as they may have some suggestions.

## Infections and Illness

We've already discussed the fact that tooth decay can cause halitosis, but other oral conditions can cause bad breath as well such as:

- Mouth sores
- Tooth or gum infections
- Recent oral surgery

Less commonly known, sinus and tonsil infections can also cause bad breath, as a build-up of mucous, pus, and other fluids containing bacteria can reside in the throat and nasal passages. If your child has recently experienced illness and bad breath, chances are the illness is to blame, so the halitosis should pass on its own.

## Foreign Objects

It's pretty common for younger children to stick just about anything that might fit up their nose, sometimes not even telling their parents. If these foreign objects become lodged in the nose for some time, it can cause bad breath. If you suspect your child has something lodged in their nose, contact their doctor immediately to confirm and assist in safely removing the object.

Ultimately, everyone experiences bad breath at some point; however, it is especially important to:

- Help children establish effective oral care routines
- Observe what they eat/drink
- Identify whether they have symptoms of pain or illness
- Take them to a professional regularly and when needed for pain/concerns
- Support the child emotionally by not making them feel badly about their bad breath
- Work with them to address and solve the issue



For more oral health information, please visit our website at [www.bcbsfepdental.com](http://www.bcbsfepdental.com).



@bcbsfepdental