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A Novel Approach to Eliminating Halitosis Among the Nigerian Populace Using Local Remedies- A Review

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Abstract

The problem of halitosis or what is commonly called bad breath affects up to 17% of Nigerians, which means about 2 out of every 10 persons you meet likely have this problem and the reality is, more than half of everyone affected don't even know they have this problem. While the remaining half who knows they have it are clueless on how to treat it. A lot of people have tried various methods to eliminate it all to no avail.

Keywords

Bad breath; Halitosis; Dental Problems; Dry Mouth; Chronic Diseases; Smoking

Introduction

The problem of halitosis or what is commonly called bad breath affects up to 17% of Nigerians , which means about 2 out of every 10 persons you meet likely have this problem and the reality is, more than half of everyone affected don't even know they have this problem. While the remaining half who knows they have it are clueless on how to treat it. A lot of people have tried various methods to eliminate it all to no avail.

This article has tried to discuss

1. What bad breath is
2. The causes of bad breath
3. how you can detect if you have bad breath,
4. the ways you can eliminate bad breath using local remedies
5. And how to help others with bad breath do the same.

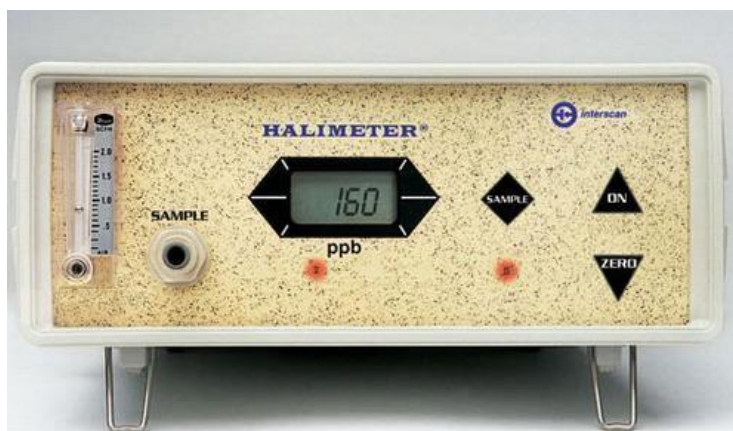
What is Halitosis?

Halitosis refers to an offensive odor emanating from the mouth, which becomes noticeable when individuals exhale. This condition is both a health concern and a social issue, often leading to social discomfort, especially during conversations.

How can you check to see if you have bad breath?

Various methods can help you determine if you have bad breath. Here are some effective techniques:

1. One of the simplest methods to check for bad breath is to breathe onto the back of your hand and then smell the odor that emerges from your mouth, giving you an indication of your breath's true scent.
2. Saliva can carry an odor. To test this, lightly lick your wrist or the back of your hand, wait a few seconds, and then smell the area. If you detect a foul odor, it's likely you have bad breath.
3. Give it a few seconds and then smell it. If you don't smell anything, then you should be ok. If you do, you likely have bad breath.
4. A spoon or tongue scraper can be used to assess breath odor. Scrape different sections of your tongue, then smell the residue on the utensil. A foul smell indicates potential bad breath.
5. A Halimeter is a device that measures bad breath, commonly found in dental clinics but also available for home use. It can be used to check breath odor for yourself and others, even as a small service to family or community members.



Halimeter

What are the Causes of Bad Breath?

Food

1. Food particles left in and around your teeth after eating can cause mouth odor.
2. Foods like garlic and onions are major culprits. Once digested, their compounds enter the bloodstream, travel to the lungs, and are exhaled, causing a noticeable odor that can last up to three days.
3. Direct contact of food particles with the mouth also contributes to bad breath.

Dental Problems

1. Poor dental hygiene can lead to gum disease and tooth decay, both of which can cause bad breath.
2. Food particles left in the mouth can harbor bacteria, resulting in an unpleasant odor.
3. A significant amount of bad breath also originates from the tongue, particularly in children.

Dry Mouth

1. The inside of your mouth should always be moist with saliva because saliva has a cleansing effect on your mouth.
2. If you don't have enough saliva circulating within your mouth, dead cells will gather on your tongue, cheeks and your gums. This in turn causes bad breath.
3. All of us experience some level of dry mouth early in the morning, which can cause 'early morning bad breath'. But this is worse in those who open their mouth while sleeping e.g those who snore.

Chronic Diseases

1. Some chronic lung conditions like infections and abscesses can cause unpleasant odors when you speak.

2. Chronic kidney failure may lead to a urine-like odor. A fishy smell could indicate chronic liver conditions, while individuals with diabetes might exhibit a fruity odor.

Nose and Throat Infections

1. Bad breath can also result from allergies. Sinus infections produce nasal discharge that drips down the throat, potentially causing a foul odor.
2. Additionally, bad breath may occur with upper respiratory conditions that involve coughing up mucus.

Smoking

1. If you smoke cigarettes, it can make your mouth dry. Smoking causes an unpleasant odor after you have puffed on a cigarette.
2. If you are a smoker, there is a greater chance for you to get gum diseases, which would be a double trouble because gum diseases also cause bad breath.

Extreme Dieting

Following a specialized diet or fasting for weight loss may lead to the development of fruity breath, a symptom of ketoacidosis. Ketoacidosis occurs due to the breakdown of chemicals during fasting.

Milk and Lactose Intolerance

1. If you discover that you're lactose intolerant, you'll need to eliminate milk from your diet.
2. Consuming milk or dairy products that you cannot digest may lead to the development of bad breath.

Alcohol Intake

Consuming alcohol can result in health problems affecting the digestive system. Additionally, it can induce dry mouth, potentially causing unpleasant breath.

Stress

You probably would have never thought that stress could cause bad breath, but it can. When you're stressed out, your digestive system is negatively affected, which triggers bad breath.

Eliminating Bad Breath- A Roadmap.

Oral Hygiene

1. The very first step to eliminating bad breath is ensuring you have good oral hygiene, regular oral hygiene is very important for your dental health as well as your regular health.
2. To practice good oral hygiene, you need to focus on three key areas of your mouth: the teeth,

gums and tongue- WHY?

3. Because these are the three places where bacteria causing mouth odor hide in most.
4. It's important to brush and floss your teeth at least twice a day.
5. Make sure that you brush your teeth after you eat. If you work away from home, take a toothbrush with you so you can brush after you eat lunch.
6. You need to use dental floss at least once a day, maybe more (Picture of a floss is shown below).
7. Flossing helps to remove food particles that are stuck in your teeth. It also helps to remove dirt which you may not ordinarily see



Also, the use of a tongue scraper is very important. Especially in children with mouth odor because over 75% of bad breath in children originate from the tongue. Go as far back into the mouth as you can when applying the tongue scraper. Please don't cause an injury to your throat while doing so.



How to use the tongue scraper

1. Clean the tongue scraper with water above room temperature.
2. Place the center of the scraper at the rear (back) end of the tongue and scrape outwards.
3. Scrape the tongue gently for at least 5 times to thoroughly remove any dirt/ debris.
4. Wash the scraper with warm water after use and rinse your mouth with water also.
5. If you wear dentures, ensure they are cleaned with soap and water at least once a day.

When you brush your teeth, use a brush with medium textured bristles and change it whenever it shows signs of wear. If you have holes in your teeth, make an appointment with a dentist to have them filled. Holes in the teeth can serve as a reservoir that traps food leftover, and this can cause bad breath when

they decay. Always gargle your mouth with water after a meal. You will be able to get rid of some of the food particles that were stuck in your teeth. Drink lots of water to keep the inside of your mouth moist. You can also produce saliva by chewing sugarless gum or candy.

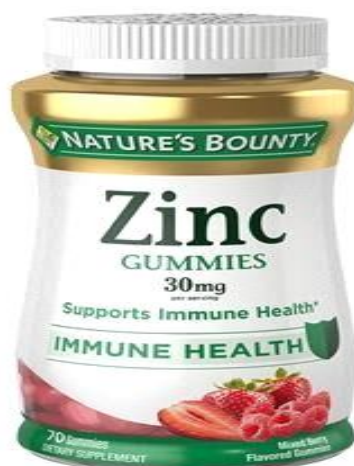
Your Diet

Here are some suggestions regarding the kind of food to take when it comes to bad breath:

1. Make sure to include fruits and vegetables that are rich with antioxidants in your diet. This would include leafy greens (broad leaf vegetables, ewedu (spinach)) and cabbage. These foods help to keep your body healthy and maintain metabolic stability.
2. You can also eat yogurt that is sugar-free and has a live culture (usually written on the back of the dietary content of the yogurt). This helps to keep away bacteria that are responsible for causing bad breath.
3. Foods that are loaded with sugar (example is carbonated drinks) pose a problem because the sugar affects the back of the throat- avoid them or reduce them to the nearest minimum.
4. In addition to onions and garlic, spices such as curry can cause bad breath. Reduce them to a minimum.
5. Drinking black tea has elements that keep bacteria away. Other teas that can help to prevent bad breath are green tea and peppermint tea.
6. Tea can also get rid of bad breath that is caused by mucus (in upper respiratory tract infections e.g flu). You don't need to drink 5 cups of tea for it to be effective, a cup per day is enough (best taken hot).

The Role of Zinc and Vitamin B

If you're not consuming enough zinc, then you could possibly have bad breath. If you are deficient, you can take up to 15 mg of Zinc per day but not more than 40 mg maximum.



An example of a Zinc supplement. (not an advert please).

The lack of Vitamin B can also be a cause of bad breath. You may want to take some niacinamide, a Vitamin B complex tablet once a day. While the above remedies are known by a number of people, maybe including you reading this article, there are remedies for bad breath known to only a few persons and this article is about to reveal them.

Lemon and Bad Breath

1. This is the solution to your bad breath if you like taking onions and garlic or other spices in significant amounts.
2. Lemon can be used in its raw form or in its juice form.
3. Using lemon in its raw form cures bad breath even after eating large amounts of onions

The Step of Using Lemon

1. Take a wedge of lemon, and sprinkle very little salt on it. Afterwards, suck on the lemon wedge until all the juices are gone.
2. That's it. It may take a couple of minutes for you to get some effect, but it works.



A Lemon Fruit.



A Lemon Wedge.



Take a fresh or dry leaf of wild mint, pour 2 drops of lemon juice on it and chew it. It will refresh your breath and help you digest foods properly.

Prepare a Mixture of Anise and Lemon Juice

1. Take a small handful of green anise seeds powder and let it stay for 4 hours in a small bowl with cold water.
2. Add 10 tablespoons of lemon juice.
3. Filter it, and use it to rinse your mouth before breakfast in the morning, in the afternoon (between meals), and at night before going to bed. **(Please don't drink it).**



Anise Seeds

How simple can it be?

1. Mix a glass of water with 5 tablespoons of Lemon juice and a pinch of salt.
2. Use this solution to gargle, and kill millions of bacteria (sulfur-producing bacteria).
3. Lemon is widely acclaimed to have bacterial killing properties, especially the bacteria that cause bad breath.
4. The above solutions will work for you even if you eat onions and garlic. So go ahead and try it out, and don't forget to keep enjoying your spices.

Avocado and Bad Breath

1. Most people who even eat avocados don't do that for their breath-freshening powers, and that's one major benefit of snacking on this tasty fruit.
2. Avocado's rich, creamy flesh cleanses your mouth when chewed, so it acts like a natural toothbrush.
3. It even gets rid of bacteria and food debris caught in your throat and intestines- that's something that even the best floss and mouthwash can't do.
4. And this even shows the power of AVOCADO in treating bad breath of various origins.

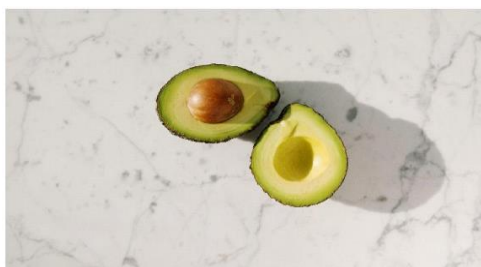
How to Use Avocado to Treat Bad Breath

1. Place an avocado at room temperature to facilitate ripening, if needed.
2. Ripening time can vary from one to two days, depending on the avocado's firmness
3. To ripen faster, put the avocado in a paper bag with a banana or an apple. An avocado is ripe if it feels soft when you gently squeeze it.



A Ripe Avocado.

4. Slice the avocado in half lengthwise with a knife.
5. Starting from the top, work the knife all the way around the avocado until you've separated it into two halves.



An Avocado cut in half.

African Walnuts and Bad Breath

1. This is by far the most interesting discovery in this field.
2. Some years ago, two teenagers discovered the effectiveness of walnuts in preventing bad breath, especially “early morning mouth odor”.
3. This is the bad breath you have when you wake the following morning after a beautiful night's sleep and it is especially pronounced in people who snore or open their mouth while sleeping.
4. This remedy is likely the easiest to use amidst the other remedies mentioned in this article.

Step 1

Procure the Walnuts.

Step 2

Enjoy the fruits by thoroughly chewing by them

Step 3

1. Don't drink water immediately after eating as this can cause a significant bitter taste in your mouth.
2. As mentioned earlier, it works especially for preventing early morning bad breath. So you should eat it before you sleep at night....
3. And then wake up to a fresh breath the following morning.



African Walnuts



African Walnuts- The white portion is the edible portion while the black outer portion is the shell.

Smoking and Bad Breath



It is a known fact that smokers suffer a lot from bad breath and while most are being advised to quit smoking as a way out, smoking is quite addictive and being able to mask the bad breath that emanates from the habit will do a lot of good.

Below are ways in which you can completely take away the embarrassment that comes with mouth odor as a smoker:

1. Always drink lots of water, at least 8 bottles of water per day (50 cl bottles).
2. Always ensure you brush your teeth twice daily and after every time you finish taking a smoke if possible.
3. Always use a tongue scraper whenever you are brushing your teeth.
4. You can chew on mint leaves dipped in lemon juice when you need some immediate breath freshness, after you just finished smoking.
5. Also get used to having a minty sugar-free chewing gum in your pocket always. Peppermint flavor is preferred.
6. If you diligently follow all the above, you'll be able to save yourself from the embarrassment that comes with bad breath.

How to Tell Someone Their Mouth Stinks Without Expressly Saying it.

How would you feel if I walked up to you and said- "Sola did you swallow a dead rat?". Of course you might likely get the joke, but you will be embarrassed. Let's face it, it's much more difficult telling the people closest to you if they have mouth odor. Almost impossible and this will make life very difficult.

What You Should Not Do

1. Asking them when was the last time they brushed their teeth.
2. Telling them outright that their breath stinks.
3. Emphasizing to them that their breath stinks.
4. Constantly repeating to them that their breath stinks

The Approach

1. Be considerate of their feelings. They may be going through some other things and you telling them that their breath stinks will only make things worse.
2. You can talk to them like you normally do in a conversation. Then you can ask them if they've had any issues with their oral health. You can set the tone so where they will feel comfortable talking to you about it.
3. You may get one of three responses: Yes, No, or they don't want to talk about it. If it's yes, see if they want to explore the subject some more. If the answer is no, then maybe you can talk to them about bad breath.
4. If they know and are not willing to discuss it with you, then wait for a time when they feel comfortable discussing it.
5. If you do get to speak with them about it, let them know that this is related to their health. It's not just a regular health issue, it's also a dental hygiene issue. Let them know that they can seek help from a physician, a dentist or both.
6. Let them know about regular brushing of their teeth and the use of a tongue scraper. They need to know that it's very important that they brush and use dental floss on a regular basis. They also need to know the purpose of doing this so they can get rid of their bad breath.
7. Also let them know they can be left out socially if they don't take care of their oral hygiene.
8. If you're able to get this message across to them without them being offended, then you're off to a good start. Don't hesitate to offer additional assistance if needed.

And what's the best form of help you can offer them?

Recommend this article to them, and follow up with them on implementing the remedies in it.

What are The Kind of Questions to ask Yourself as a form of Self Examination?

These questions will help you identify the source of your mouth odor and identifying the source of bad breath makes it easier to treat.

1. What kind of odor or smell does your breath have? Fishy? Fruity? Alcohol?
2. Do you eat spicy foods on a regular basis (example is onions and garlic)?
3. Are you a smoker?
4. Have you been practicing good oral hygiene?
5. What kind of remedies have you tried for your bad breath?
6. Are you having problems with your dental hygiene?
7. Do you have any allergies, sinus problems, sore throat, etc.?
8. What other health issues are you experiencing?

Conclusion

In conclusion, while a lot of scientific evidence abound on how effective the remedies in this book are, there is still a lot more to uncover. The most effective way to eliminate conditions like halitosis is using

remedies which would have the least side effects as halitosis sometimes can be a pointer to a deep seated medical condition. While seeing a dentist would be the best option for an individual suffering from bad breath, research shows that the ratio of dentists to the populace hovers around 1:40,000 in Nigeria. This makes it almost impossible for the majority of individuals living with the condition to have access to a dentist. This article has helped to open up that rabbit hole of using ingredients around us to cure or at least limit the social impact of a condition like halitosis, the author believes there are many more 'agents' around us for many more conditions known to man. And they need to be explored and experimented.

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