

Fact sheet: Management of halitosis

Diagnosis of halitosis (bad breath) is made by smelling the patient's exhaled breath and from a thorough dental and medical examination. Ninety per cent of halitosis originates from the mouth and a dental check is recommended first. Assessment of oral hygiene and the presence of cavities, gum disease, swelling, dry mouth and throat infection are required.



For temporary causes:

- Avoid eating smelly foods, and drinking alcohol and coffee
- Drink plenty of water
- Improve oral hygiene
- Clean the back of the tongue
- Mouthwashes may help in the short term.



For persistent oral causes, management depends on the cause and may involve

- Improving oral hygiene and tongue cleaning
- Treatment of gum disease
- Management of decay, such as fillings
- Extraction of teeth
- Treatment of abscesses
- Management of dry mouth/xerostomia (see fact sheets "What is dry mouth?" and "Care of dry mouth")

Medical assessment is advised if the halitosis isn't resolved after dental treatment.

You may also consult your pharmacist for advice.