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Dental Digest

Don't Let Bad Breath Ruin Your Valentines Day!

When you have a date night set up for Valentine's Day, don't let bad breath ruin your plans. Take advantage of these sweet tips to keep your breath smelling fresh for Valentines Day and beyond!

What causes bad breath?

Studies show that about 80% of bad breath cases result directly from the mouth and the bacteria thriving there. Millions of oral bacteria produce sulfur gases and other compounds that smell unpleasant.

Cavities, gum disease, unclean dentures, or tonsil problems may all contribute to bad breath. Stay on schedule with your preventive dental visits to be sure any disease activity is eliminated. Untreated gum disease is also the number one cause of tooth loss in adults. Together we can stop bad breath *and* help you keep your smile healthy.

Sometimes you're practicing excellent oral hygiene but still feel frustrated by unpleasant mouth odors. If you've eliminated the other possibilities, it's time to take a better look at your tongue. The top of the tongue is covered in a forest of papillae, projections that support taste buds and provide a textured surface to aid tactile sensation. But the velvety surface traps dead cells, food debris, and bacteria. Sulfur gases produced by bacteria contribute to the odiferous mix, and a coating forms across the tongue. When this coating thickens, your taste may also be altered as the odor intensifies.

What can I do to eliminate bad breath?

1. Brush and floss your teeth

Brush your teeth at least twice a day. If you can, brush after each meal and floss your teeth at least once each day. Flossing properly removes plaque and food particles from between the teeth that could otherwise cause bad breath.

2. Replace your toothbrush

If you are one of those people who only get a new toothbrush when you come to our office for your six-month cleaning, you could be contributing to your bad breath. An old, worn out toothbrush cannot clean your pearly whites as well and the toothbrush could also be harboring bacteria. Your toothbrush should be replaced every three to four months. A toothbrush with frayed bristles should also be replaced. Use an electric toothbrush to ensure thoroughness.

3. Brush your tongue

Bad breath-causing bacteria and plaque grow and gather on the tongue. Brush your tongue from back to front to help reduce odors. It's a good idea to use a tongue scraper as it will provide a better clean. Or, alternatively, you may use the built-in tongue cleaner on the back of a toothbrush.

4. Watch what you eat

Some foods can be the sources of bad breath. Strong cheeses, garlic, onions and hot peppers can be avoided or eaten in small amounts to help lessen bad breath. For your romantic Valentine's Day dinner, you may want to skip these foods altogether.

5. Avoid having dry mouth

Saliva is nature's way of cleaning the mouth. If you have dry mouth, food particles and bacteria are not being washed away as they should be. This can cause bad breath. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated! Keep in mind that coffee, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages can all contribute to dry mouth.

It's true that sometimes medications and health issues can also be causing you to have dry mouth. So it may be necessary to speak with your physician about possible alternatives. Keep in mind that mouth breathing is another culprit.

6. Don't use tobacco products

Not only are smoking and chewing tobacco bad for your health, they can lead to bad breath. The scent of these products tends to linger in the mouth after use. We recommend avoiding tobacco products entirely.

Dental Benefits of Dark Chocolate

After all this talk of what to avoid, let's talk about something you need not avoid this Valentine's Day! Valentine's Day is the perfect time to indulge in some dark chocolate! The best thing about dark chocolate is that you don't have to limit yourself to enjoying it on this holiday. Dark chocolate offers significant benefits for your oral health, including preventing bad breath and lowering your risk of tooth decay. The cocoa bean husk used to make this type of chocolate has been shown to have an antibacterial effect that gets rid of bacteria that cause your breath to smell bad and increase the risk of tooth decay. Dark chocolate also contains a compound known as CBH, which makes your tooth enamel stronger and less vulnerable to decay and damage. When you eat this type of chocolate, which contains less sugar than milk chocolate, it reduces a number of bacteria in your mouth and prevents plaque from building up on your teeth. Keep in mind that this kind of chocolate has other benefits as well, including boosting your mood and promoting healthy blood circulation.

Schedule and Keep Dental Cleaning Visits

To help prevent or lessen bad breath all year round, we encourage you to schedule and keep dental cleaning and exam visits. Don't be afraid to tell Dr. Turman or your hygienist about your concerns with bad breath and we can help determine the cause. Bad breath is often caused by tooth decay or gum disease, which can be treated at our office. If your bad breath is caused by a general health condition, Dr. Turman may recommend that you see your doctor.

Don't let bad breath spoil your Valentine's Day plans! Contact Linton Dental at 254-4521 today to learn more about remedies for bad breath and to schedule your next visit.