

Halitosis in the House

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Whenever I think about Halitosis (bad breath) I now think of the medical series with the scruffy cranky rude genius physician. Not that I think he has bad breath or that bad breath is necessarily rude. I am just waiting for a whole episode centered around a desperate dying patient with bad breath as the primary symptom. He may have saved some halitosis patient already--I haven't seen many episodes. But the point is that bad breath is more than too much garlic in your tuna salad sandwich.

Chronic bad breath is usually a sign of some infection or disorder. I once ended up in a cab in Chicago with a driver who insisted (and would not stop lecturing) that he could tell as soon as someone entered his cab "if they got that AIDS" by their breath. Paranoia set in and I did a quick breath check as he rambled on. I have no idea if you can diagnose HIV with your nose, but several common symptoms do produce bad breath.

The most common problem related to bad breath is periodontal disease (pyorrhea, gum disease), but the list of possible causes is extensive. As a partial sampling you have other oral conditions, such as dry mouth, canker ulcers, extensive decay and other infections. Tonsil, adenoid, and other pharyngeal conditions, sinus problems or infections, nasal conditions including postnasal drip, respiratory tract infections, lung, stomach, even systemic or metabolic disorders (diabetes, kidney, liver, immune systems). But no need to call Dr. House right away. It is unlikely that the problem is life threatening, though you should understand that it is a sign of a problem (just like bleeding gums!)

How do you know if you have halitosis? Most people can tell with the simple breath in the palm test. If not, hopefully friends or family will clue you. There are halitosis "meters" that usually detect sulfur compounds in your breath. I think they sell to the paranoid--bad breath just smells bad.

Where to look for solutions for chronic bad breath? One thing is certain--Scope, gum, mints or any other magic potion is not the answer. If you know your halitosis has persisted for more than a few weeks, you should see someone for answers. My view is seek out the most simple, common and likely answers first. That is usually periodontal disease (or oral infection). I have seen many patients cured of bad breath by simply adopting a better oral hygiene regiment. See your dentist--it takes less time than an episode of House.

[Causes of Halitosis - WrongDiagnosis.com](http://WrongDiagnosis.com/Causes_of_Halitosis)

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Tonsillitis

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