



Country Dental

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Appointments:
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Opening times:
Monday to Friday
9.00am to 1.00pm
2.00pm to 6.00pm

Late evenings
by appointment

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Bad Breath

We are often asked about the causes of bad breath and how one can avoid it. Here are a list of questions patients frequently ask:

How can I tell I have bad breath?

Often people will not tell you have bad breath as it is embarrassing. People might turn their face away when you are speaking – a good indicator. Alternatively, you can lick the back of your wrist and let it dry. Next smell your wrist – a poor smell indicates bad breath!

What are the common causes of bad breath?

- **Gum disease** – pungent odours are caused by bacteria that release sulphur compounds and stale blood produced from bleeding gums. It is essential that you visit for a dental examination regularly to monitor your gum health in addition to thorough daily oral hygiene at home. Good oral hygiene involves thorough tooth brushing and cleaning in between your teeth with brushes and floss. As much as 50% of plaque can be retained between your teeth so tooth brushing alone is insufficient to clean your teeth. A regular visit to our hygienist can help maintain your gum health.
- **Food packing** – Food can pack in gaps between your teeth which breaks down and causes an odour. Gaps may be caused by teeth drifting, deficient restorations or due to bone loss around the teeth. Ensure good oral hygiene – especially in between the teeth. Small bottle brushes can be very efficient at removing food debris (ask your dentist or hygienist what size is suitable). Ask at your next examination to see if the gaps can be reduced to prevent food packing. Diet – highly spiced food, garlic and coffee can all cause odours from the stomach. Fasting and dieting can produce the release of ketones which cause an odour.
- **Dehydration** – most of us do not drink enough water causing the mucous membranes to dry out and bacteria to proliferate. Drink plenty of water to cleanse the mouth to help produce plenty of saliva.
- **Smoking** – produces bad breath due to the stale tobacco products remaining in the mouth in addition to drying the mouth. Smokers often have gum disease also which adds to the poor odour.
- **Morning breath** – this can be caused by dehydration or sinus drip. Sinus drip is where drainage from the sinus occurs onto the back of the tongue overnight. The bacteria and mucus then start to break down and cause an odour. Drink plenty of water and clean the back of the tongue as part of your oral hygiene regime.
- **Dentures** – can harbour bacteria and fungi. Clean your dentures thoroughly out of the mouth with soap and water. Clean your own teeth separately paying particular attention to the sides of the teeth that touch the plate. Plastic dentures can be soaked in diluted Milton fluid two or three times a week to cleanse the dentures and prevent gum inflammation.

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- **Medication** – some medications can cause mouth odours. Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration.
- **Medical conditions** – some medical conditions such as diabetes, liver and kidney problems, bronchitis, sinusitis and throat infections can cause malodours. If your dentist fails to find any mouth problems that could cause bad breath, you may need to consult a family doctor.

Mouth washes can freshen the breath by masking the odour for a brief period of time but it is recommended the cause of the problem is investigated and dealt with.