

# Bad Breath (Halitosis)

## Information for Parents

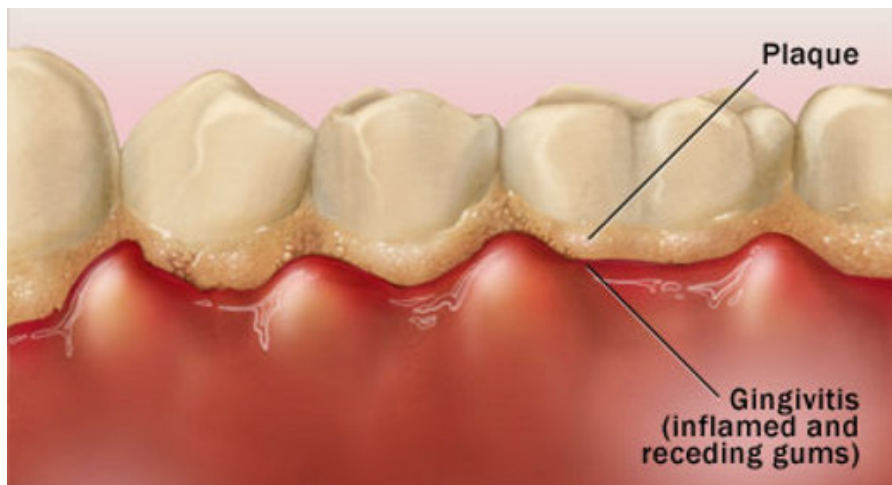
Bad breath can be attributed to a number of potential causes. In children, especially younger children, the causes are fewer.

When bad breath is noticed, the first recommendations are always the more conservative interventions, beginning with improved oral hygiene habits (making sure to brush using an ADA-approved, fluoridated toothpaste at least twice daily and floss once daily) and making sure to be drinking plenty of water each day.

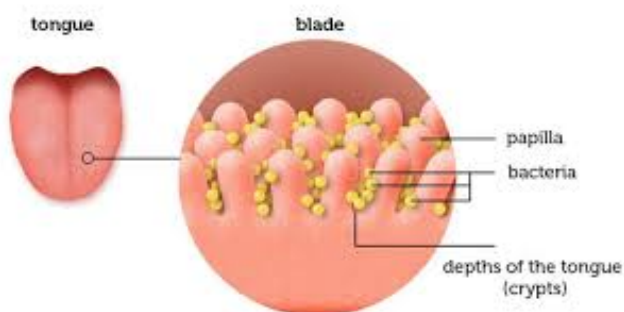
### Potential Causes

#### Poor Oral Hygiene

If your child doesn't brush and floss daily, food particles can remain in the mouth, bacteria break them down and release a foul odor.



When bacteria and digested food products (plaque) collect along the gumline, the gums will become irritated, swell, and develop pockets that fill with additional plaque. The tongue can also act like a sponge to these bacteria and their products, which is why we recommend cleaning your tongue as well (either with the toothbrush, or in more severe cases of bad breath, using a tongue scraper).



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### Food

The breakdown of food particles in your food can increase the number of bacteria in your mouth and increase the foul odor they produce. For this reason, it is advised to help your kiddo brush the teeth immediately after meals, minimizing the amount of available food source for the bacteria (and as a happy side-effect, this routine will also reduce the risk for cavities). Certain foods including *garlic, onions, and other spices*, once digested some of their molecules absorbed in the bloodstream and released from the lungs into your breath.

### Dry Mouth

Saliva naturally helps to clean the mouth, removing particles that cause bad breath and odors. A condition called dry mouth (xerostomia) can result in bad breath. Dry mouth occurs naturally during sleep, which is why we wake up each day with “morning breath.” Mouth breathing throughout the night and during the day can be a cause of bad breath. Some medications can also cause bad breath by contributing to dry mouth.

### Tonsils

Bad breath can also be caused by small stones that form in the tonsils and are covered/packed with bacteria that decompose food and produce a very strong, foul odor. Infections of the nose, sinuses or throat also can cause bad breath.



### Other Causes

- Chronic reflux of stomach acids (GERD) can be associated with bad breath
- Bad breath in young children can also be caused by a foreign body, such as a piece of food, lodged in a nostril