

Breath of fresh air - By Joanna Tovia

SPARKLING white teeth are something we all aspire to when we flash our best smile but one dentist has made it his business to go one step further by sending his clients home with a recipe for fresh, clean breath as well. Geoffrey Speiser founded Australia's first Bad Breath Clinic after spotting a real need for bad breath solutions among his clients.



People suffering from this rather anti-social affliction are more common than you might think but Dr Speiser says traditional dentists just don't have the tools with which to treat it.

Before Dr Speiser began researching bad breath and its causes, he says he too was at a loss as to how to solve his patients' bad breath. The causes of bad breath and its solutions are not taught at university and most dentists resort to advising their patients to use mouthwashes.

But Dr Speiser says using a mouthwash can be the worst thing you can do – it can actually make the problem worse. Most commercial mouthwashes contain alcohol (some are as much as 25 per cent alcohol) which can dry out the mouth. A dry mouth is one of the major causes of bad breath.

Dr Speiser says the other main causes of bad breath are nasal problems where too much mucus is generated and people who smoke and drink. "Smoking starves the mouth of oxygen," Dr Speiser says. The habit also dries out the mouth which changes its natural bacteria. Seven out of 10 medications also cause dry mouth, Dr Speiser says. Age is another factor – the older we get, the less saliva we produce. "Babies don't have bad breath," Dr Speiser explains. In

his efforts to alleviate patients of bad breath, Dr Speiser began to work with a specialist in the US and researchers in New Zealand to develop a line of oral health care products that assisted people suffering from bad breath.

In 1997, Dr Speiser launched the Breeze professional treatment onto the Australian market. Given that bad breath is such an embarrassing condition, Dr Speiser says many people seek advice and a solution on the internet. To accommodate these people, and also those who do not live in Sydney and are unable to visit the Edgecliff clinic, Dr Speiser has developed a website where people can order bad breath products and learn more about the topic – www.badbreath.com.au.

Dr Speiser says the success rate of his treatments are "up in the 90 per cent range". The challenge for Dr Speiser is that he is up against marketing efforts which train people to scrub their teeth and use a mouth wash. "We are trying to overcome all the old wives' tales," he says. He says the best way to prevent bad breath becoming a problem is to clean your tongue with a proper tongue scraper available from dentists. Using a toothbrush to try to clean your tongue is ineffective because it just moves the bacteria around. He also warns against buying commonly available toothbrushes with tongue cleaners on the ends – they simply aren't up to the task. The tongue is the largest organ in the mouth so a multitude of bacteria lives on the tongue – the cleaner the tongue, the fresher the breath.