

Breathe easy

WE asked Dr Geoffrey Speiser, the oral care expert behind the new anti-halitosis probiotic Breezecare, a few tricky questions about bad breath...

POST SCRIPT: What is bad breath, and who gets it?

DR GEOFFREY SPEISER: Bad breath could be defined as an infection of the oral cavity and unfortunately, odour is usually the only clinical symptom. In fact, it's common to find mild to extremely unpleasant halitosis without any visible 'cause' in individuals who have immaculate mouths and are in good health generally. Bad breath can affect anyone. Even celebrities get it—most recently Hilary Swank, while training for her role in the silver screen flick, *Million Dollar Baby*.

PS: Is it true that bad breath is caused by poor hygiene?

Dr Speiser: Having consulted many clients over the years I have to say I have heard every single myth associated with bad breath! It is a widely common misconception that bad breath is caused by poor oral hygiene, indigestion, and even that you may have worms. In fact what we have found is that bad breath is often a result of an imbalance of the bacteria in your mouth. Should the imbalance be long-term then the halitosis will become chronic. Lifestyle habits such as smoking and alcohol are contributory factors, so are best avoided. Also most prescription medicines will dry the mouth and produce bad breath as a side-effect. Finally if you are an allergic person, you are a prime candidate for breath problems.

PS: What are the options available for treating bad breath?

Dr Speiser: There are many different treatments available on the market for the treatment of bad breath, although they are effective to varying degrees. At the Australian Bad Breath Clinic in Edgecliff, Sydney, we recommend a system that uses products specifically developed to remove the build-up of coating on the tongue, teeth and gums, as this is where the bacteria live. We follow this by use of our probiotic, Kforce, to place good bacteria back on your tongue, and then let these bacteria maximise your mouth health.

PS: What happens when a person develops bad breath?

Dr Speiser: The person develops a biofilm, a combination of mucus, saliva and plaque across the teeth, gums, tongue, throat and nasal passages. Bacteria that survive with oxygen then inhabit this biofilm. They digest the proteins in the biofilm and release volatile sulphur compounds (VSCs) which go on to create the smells associated with bad breath. The most common smell is similar to rotten eggs, and another is similar to that of faeces. As a result a lot of old wives' tales have entrenched themselves in our society, such as that bad breath stems from the bowels.

PS: And should we tell someone they have bad breath?

Dr Speiser: My personal belief is that it all comes down to your relationship with the person. You need to be very close to the person so that you do not offend them. Generally, when I approach a patient about the problem, I concentrate on the bad taste the patient may have, or the coated tongue they usually display. Most people are aware of these signs and react positively to them. This then leads to talking about bad breath and the bacteria that cause the problem. **PS**



A fat-burning fitness regime for her Oscar-winning role in *Million Dollar Baby* gave Hilary Swank the perfect figure for the role—as well as halitosis