



MEDIA RELEASE

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Oral Health for “Kisses Sweeter than Wine”

Valentine’s Day signals romance, a special time for sweethearts. If you find your loved one is backing away from your kisses, you may have an easily solved oral health problem.

Halitosis, or bad breath, is one of society’s great social stigmas. It can affect relationships, as well as a person’s self-confidence. Chewing gum, mouthwashes and other products are available to mask bad breath, but they do not get rid of the problem.

Halitosis can be caused by some foods such as garlic or stomach problems like acid reflux, but the most common source of bad breath is from high levels of bacteria in the mouth. Food particles get stuck between the teeth, around the gums and on your tongue. As these particles are digested by the bacteria, a bad, sulphur-like smell is produced.

“Ninety percent of bad breath stems from oral factors,” said Dr. Iris Kuc, an Edmonton dentist. “Periodontal disease arises when by-products produced by the bacteria in our mouths attack the gums and bone that support the teeth. These bacteria, together with foods that we eat, form a substance known as plaque. Plaque forms around our teeth, and also in the pockets found at the base of the teeth. Many people miss brushing this area. People with deep pockets have a great breeding grounds for bacteria, so they must be even more vigilant with their daily oral hygiene routine.”

Dr. Kuc also advises patients to brush their tongues, since “the surface of the tongue has tiny papilla, which trap and retain bacteria and food particles.”

Bad breath can also be triggered by dentures that have not been properly cleaned, sinus problems, enlarged tonsils that can collect bacteria and food particles, smoking, using medications that cause the mouth to dry up, or more serious medical conditions, such as diabetes.

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Saliva and water help rinse away bacteria and food particles, so drinking plenty of water will help keep bacteria at bay. Dry mouth occurs naturally while sleeping (*morning breath*) when saliva production slows, so it is important to start hydration when you get up.

If you or your loved one have persistent bad breath (one US study estimates 10-30 percent of people have this problem), it may be worth a trip to the dentist to identify the cause. Besides administering a professional cleaning and scaling, the dentist may treat the problem by cleaning the tongue or prescribing special toothpaste, gels or mouthwashes. If bad breath is masking a more serious problem, like periodontal disease, a patient may be referred to a dental specialist like a periodontist.

“However, most people can manage bad breath with good oral hygiene: brushing and flossing the teeth, brushing the tongue, and having professional cleanings at least twice a year,” said Dr. Kuc..

To find out more about halitosis and how it can be treated, talk to your dentist or go to the Alberta Dental Association and College website www.abda.ab.ca.-

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