

Bad Breath Needs Understanding

Bad breath, halitosis, or oral malodor are synonymous terms for breath malodor. While a matter of semantics, recognition of the difference between bad breath and oral malodor is important. Oral malodor is considered a symptom rather than the outcome of a specific pathologic process. For those who suffer from oral malodor the consequences can be of immense importance and concern. Surprisingly, this important and often debilitating condition continues to be poorly understood and is generally overlooked by the dental profession at large. Despite a very large body of literature on the topic with regards to etiology and management of oral malodor we still know very little about its epidemiology and impact on quality of life. There are very few, if any, evidence-based and systematic reviews with meta analyses on the management of oral malodor. Notwithstanding this, the condition is widely recognized in the community and this has led to wide scale marketing, and consumption, of breath freshening aids (lozenges, mouth rinses, tooth pastes, etc) which represent a billion dollar industry. Although management of oral malodor is not the most glamorous aspect of dentistry it is a fascinating and important aspect of patient care. With the use of modern technology and the increasing understanding of the role certain bacteria play in oral malodor, the management of this condition is becoming more predictable.