1 AILMENT 3 APPROACHES

What to do when your breath smells like garbage

How 2 alternative therapists and a doctor alleviate bad breath in their patients

BAD breath, medically called halitosis, can result from poor oral hygiene habits and may be a sign of other health problems. Half listed a one-size-for-each review by the 3 care effective cure and unbeatable lifestyle habits.

TCM

If we rule out poor oral hygiene, bad breath or halitosis may be a sign of some deep-seated health problems. Depending on any other accompanying symptoms, several diagnoses may be associated with bad breath.

According to TCM, bad breath is particularly attributed to indigestion and a weak stomach, said Ms Lee Yit, principal TCM practitioner with Chinese Herbal Heritage. This condition is due to weak and blocked energy channel by some blood imbalances and gives thrives to eating habits. Eating too little, keeping irregular meal times or over-eating spicy or pungent type of food can contribute to the problem.

Frequent indigestion will lead to the accumulation of stagnant unrefined food and heat in the stomach. Heat from it is now communicate and manual dependence of all the organ systems, when every all is not perfect and bad breath can lead to other health problems. Other possible problems are caused with bad breath include trouble with mood imbalance, stress or sometimes illness.

Based on the identified root cause, your TCM practitioner may prescribe herbs and recommend foods such as acute ale (leaf, bamboo) (also called Jackal shelling cheese pie) or orange and other oil.

The key treatment aims are to strength on the yellow, improve digestion, promote heat and nettle the stomach and spleen, and to align other organ imbalances. Each treatment is individualised according to degree on of the symptoms. It is important to note that the success of the therapy involves changes in lifestyle and dietary habits.

AROMATHERAPY

Aromatherapists may add one to three drops of the essential oils of chamomile, rose, lavender and tea tree to a cup of boiling water. Sip the cooled water slowly to rinse your mouth and throat. Alternatively, you can add 2 drops of the oil to a glass of lukewarm water. Sip and swallow washing the mouth can and gargling with the mixture twice daily, said aromatherapist Christine Lim from Aromatic Art of Aromatherapy.

For general dental hygiene, dissolve for drops each of thyme, tea tree or fennel oil in one tablespoon of vodka, and add 250ml of distilled water into a dark container with a tight lid. Shake well. Leave for a month, then filter with coffee filter paper. Use the mixture to rinse the mouth twice daily.

Traditional remedies to remove the breath, such as chewing coriander seeds, coriander seeds and citrus fruits, Thymbra pungent mint, and basil leaves also work after eating strong smelling food.

Dental hygiene with regular brushing and flossing is also crucial. Brushing can remove even accumulating skin bodies.

MODERN MEDICINE

Most of the time, bad breath originates in the mouth. It is caused by the oral bacteria that break down food debris. This creates the smell as it is produced by sulphur compounds that emit a smell similar to rotten eggs.

Bad breath or halitosis is commonly due to dental problems, including poor oral hygiene, tooth decay, gum diseases and external agents such as cigarettes cigarette, and certain medications. In some conditions, the odour can be caused by the mouth conditions stimulating saliva production. It is advisable to avoid carbohydrate beverages such as tea and coffee as they can contribute to oral dehydration.

If you have a dry throat or mind problem, try a coffee mint gum. It humidifies the mouth and helps to stimulate saliva flow.

One of the easiest and most efficient treatments for halitosis is regular flossing, toothbrushing and cleaning of the teeth and tongue, said Dr Lim Poh Lian, consultant and senior lecturer with Raffles Dental. Effective oral cleans such as chlorhexidine rinse can also help to kill bacteria. Avoid rinses that contain alcohol as they can dehydrate the mouth, damage gum tissue and, in turn, encourage the development of bad breath.

Drink lots of water throughout the day to increase saliva flow as this helps to flush bacteria and other contaminants. This is especially important when you are taking medicines that cause dry mouth conditions as a side effect.

Dr Lim also recommends that you visit your dentist for a check-up every six months. Dental problems, including poor oral hygiene, can be caused by the mouth conditions mentioned above. Your dentist can also help to remove the accumulated tartar and plaque that you cannot remove by brushing.

Pretty on the plate and a star on the palate

IN THE West, the mustard tree (*sinapis*) is more commonly known as cruciferin, and is considered to be a luminous and expensive fruit.

Here, it is both common and popular because of its high water content and as a refreshing treat in our tropical heat.

The juicy fruit is a good alternative to meat as it has a relatively higher water content than most fruits.

It is also an excellent source of Vitamin C. A small whole fruit will contribute to one-third of the recommended daily Vitamin C intake. It is also high in dietary fibre and can be easily substituted.

When buying cantaloupe, choose those that are dense, firm and even-coloured.

If only melon fruits are available, all you need to do is to place them in room temperature and ripen them after two days.

The mustard is also popular because it is convenient to eat. Simply wash the fruit, remove the blemished areas and slice them across — **WENDY KOH**

Women now more aware of menopausal symptoms

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WOMEN used to start preparing for menopause in their late 40s. That made sense, since the normal age on onset is menopause was between 45 and 55. In this generation, the average age is 51 years.

But, said Miss Doris Lim, president of the Women's Wellness Management Support Group, the majority group has seen more women leave their work management many years or a younger age, even 40 years.

One reason for this, said Dr Chua Sing, a consultant, obstetrician, and gynaecologist and director of A Clinic for Women, might be that "now women are more aware of menopause, so symptoms and exercises of discomfort that their counterparts one or two generations ago, also might have been more prone to bring through their menstrual irregularities".

THE LAST PERIOD

Menopause is defined as the last menstrual period. It occurs when the ovaries run out of follicles and fail to produce enough female hormones. By the time this occurs, a woman's body undergoes an adjustment period. In many women, these adjustments manifest as menopausal symptoms.

According to a menopause survey commissioned by Wellness, the support from the Women's Wellness Management Support Group, 200 women aged between 40 and 55 found loneliness, hot flashes and forgetfulness as the top three symptoms. Other indications were night sweats, body pain and muscular aches, and insomnia.

Local studies, said Dr Chua, indicate that only about 20 per cent of women experience moderate or severe symptoms during the menopausal period or menopause, while the majority only experience mild or insignificant symptoms.

But, she cautioned, women also come from different age, ethnic and geographical backgrounds and so their experiences may be different. The common denominator is that they have to go through the menopause.

"Women should realise that it is also the right old age to be aware of the female cancers, so menstrual abnormalities should always be investigated," she said.

FREQUENTLY MENOPAUSE

Menopause is by definition permanent if the woman is under 40 years of age. Typically, about 5 per cent of women reach menopause prematurely.

It could be because of genetics, chemotherapy or radiation therapy, or autoimmune diseases. Or it could be surgically induced. In this situation, the ovaries are removed and need to be removed.

At the core of pelvic cancer patients Mrs Lucy Goh, menopause came as early as 37 years. When she found of undergoing chemotherapy and radiation therapy to cure the cancer," she said.

Women such as Mrs Goh, who menopause prematurely, have their follicles are made from those who naturally reach menopause, said Dr Chua. This also have significantly higher risk of health problems such as osteoporosis.

Menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and mood swings are abruptly and severely in some women, making the transition into menopause difficult to cope with.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS

When these women also undergo life-giving factors such as surgery or chemotherapy, it may not be obvious to the women or to them to show the fact that they are in fact undergoing premature ovarian failure.

It is important to diagnose these women early to help them effectively manage short-term symptoms and long-term health.

In Mrs Goh's case, she said the symptoms are under control because she has taken the necessary steps to manage them.

"I frequently monitor to keep myself cool, and I make it a point to avoid triggers," she said.

The doctor, too, say both doctors and support groups, is important in helping women to cope better with menopause.

A useful number to call is the Women's Wellness Management Support Group at 6339 1400.