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DON'T STAND...  
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SO CLOSE TO ME

Ah, the holidays—time for friends, family, and of course... food! It's when we indulge in our favorites; lots of turkey and pumpkin pie. With these foods come ingredients like garlic, ginger and onions. If you notice your beloved friends and family inching back a few extra steps during conversations or if many people seem to have that proverbial finger (no, not that one) across the bottom of their nose when you're talking, it may be your breath that needs some attention.

Bad breath, or halitosis, is something most of us have experienced. Some bad breath is temporary due to your diet, dehydration, medications, or hormones that alter the balance of bacteria. Ninety percent of bad breath is caused by volatile sulphur compounds produced by oral bacteria. Inadequate cleaning of your teeth, gums and tongue can leave behind food debris which eventually produces the bacteria that releases foul-smelling gases. Usually, brushing, flossing, and rinsing can take care of normal, temporary bad breath caused by foods.

For many people, chronic bad breath can be a problem that is psychologically damaging or even affects your

job or a personal relationship. This can happen despite your best efforts of home oral care. It could be caused by medical conditions such as gastrointestinal problems like acid reflux, sinus infections or diabetes. Dental causes include dry mouth, gingivitis, or decay in your mouth or gums (periodontal disease). Women may suffer from bad breath for a few days a month because hormones increase saliva proteins.

So, how do you tell if *you* have bad breath? One quick test is to lick your wrist, wait a few seconds, then smell. Does your wrist have a bad odor? Another test is to take a piece of unwaxed, unflavored dental floss and floss between your back molars (upper and lower). Wait for 45 seconds and then smell it closely. Does it nearly make you lose consciousness?

If you have questions about the degree of foulness in your breath, talk to your dentist. He or she can help determine the cause and eradicate the problem. You'll feel better and your friends and family will thank you for it! It'll get you back into the social graces of society and get you out there to hit the holiday circuit with confidence!