

Bad Breath in Dogs

from WebMD

We all know bad breath—also known as halitosis—when we smell it. Bad breath is the result of a build-up of odor-producing bacteria in your dog’s mouth, lungs or gut. Persistent bad breath can indicate that your dog needs better dental care or that something is wrong in his gastrointestinal tract, liver or kidneys. In all cases, halitosis is a red flag that should be investigated.

What Is Bad Breath Caused By?

Most often, canine bad breath is caused by dental or gum disease, and certain dogs—particularly small ones—are especially prone to plaque and tartar. However, persistent bad breath can also indicate larger medical problems in the mouth, respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract or organs.

How Can I Determine The Cause of My Dog’s Bad Breath?

Your veterinarian is the best person to pinpoint the cause. A physical examination and laboratory work may be performed. Be ready to answer questions about your dog’s diet, oral hygiene, exercise habits and general behavior.

When Is It Time To See The Vet?

If your dog’s breath suddenly has an unusual smell, please consult your veterinarian. The following cases can signal to medical problems that need immediate treatment.

- Unusually sweet or fruity breath could indicate diabetes, particularly if your dog has been drinking and urinating more frequently than usual.
- Breath that smells like urine can be a sign of kidney disease.
- An unusually foul odor accompanied by vomiting, lack of appetite, and yellow-tinged corneas and/or gums could signal a liver problem.

How Is Bad Breath Treated?

Treatment depends on your vet’s diagnosis. If plaque is the culprit, your dog might require a professional cleaning. If it’s an issue of diet, you might have to change your dog’s regular food. If the cause is gastrointestinal or an abnormality in your dog’s liver kidneys or lungs, please consult your vet about steps you should take.

How Can I Prevent My Dog From Having Bad Breath?

Many people assume that bad breath in dogs, especially at a certain age, is a “given”—but that’s not the case. In fact, being proactive about your pup’s oral health will not only make your life together more pleasant, it’s smart preventive medicine.

- Bring your dog in for regular checkups to make sure he has no underlying medical issues that may cause halitosis.
- Make sure your vet monitors and tracks the state of your dog’s teeth and breath.
- Feed your dog a high-quality, easy-to-digest food.
- Brush your dog’s teeth frequently—every day is ideal. (Please be sure to use toothpaste formulated for dogs as human toothpaste can upset a canine’s stomach.)
- Provide hard, safe chew toys that allow your dog’s teeth to be cleaned by the natural process of chewing
- Give your dog well-researched treats formulated to improve breath odor.
- Discuss home-use oral health products with your veterinarian to see if there’s a type he or she recommends.

Note: Please keep in mind, these products simply mask bad breath and do not treat underlying medical problems.