



#### GUMS & TEETH, HEALTH

## How to Get Kissably Fresh Breath

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You know that charming scene from “The Lady and the Tramp,” where the dogs share spaghetti? The pooches end up exchanging smooches. But here’s one problem when [humans try to recreate that sweet scene](#): garlic breath! Couples often head to Italian restaurants for a little romantic Valentine’s Day dinner, only to find themselves reaching for mega-powered mints afterward. That’s because [garlic and onions contain stinky sulfur compounds](#) that combine with gas-emitting bacteria to create a hurricane of halitosis, a.k.a. “bad breath.”

You don’t have to give up garlic bread to have kissably sweet breath. It’s possible to pair your more smelly eats with other foods that have a freshening effect. We’ll list a few below, but first, a putrid primer on bad breath and how to keep it in check:

## Bad to the Bone

Try sniffing your floss after you use it — if you dare. Like most people, you might get a not-so-pleasant whiff of rotten eggs and spoiled cabbage. Just lovely. These unsexy [scents come from gas-emitting bacteria](#) that release stinky compounds — such as hydrogen sulfide and methyl mercaptan — that cause bad breath.

According to *Scientific American*, “... scientists have detected around 150 molecular components of human exhalations, many of them putrid. Dimethyl sulfide (think rotten seaweed) and the tellingly named cadaverine, putrescine, and skatole are just a few such pungent molecules.” Malodorous molecule-producing bacteria throw raucous raves in the gaps between gums and teeth and in the crevices of the tongue.



## Back to the Basics

So what to do about these bad-to-the-bone bacteria? Some mouthwashes promise hours of minty delight, but alcohol-based rinses are not the long-term answer to foul microbes because they basically carpet-bomb

Scientists are working to create [new products](#) that will target especially noxious bacteria. For now, the best course to keep them in check is Brushing and Flossing 101. Brush gently twice a day (don't forget your tongue!) and floss at least once daily to help maintain the healthy ecology of your mouth — and give the good bacteria a chance to party. Now as you toss your floss, be glad those smelly buggers are in the trash can, thanks to your dental-hygiene prowess.

## What to Eat to Keep Your Breath Sweet

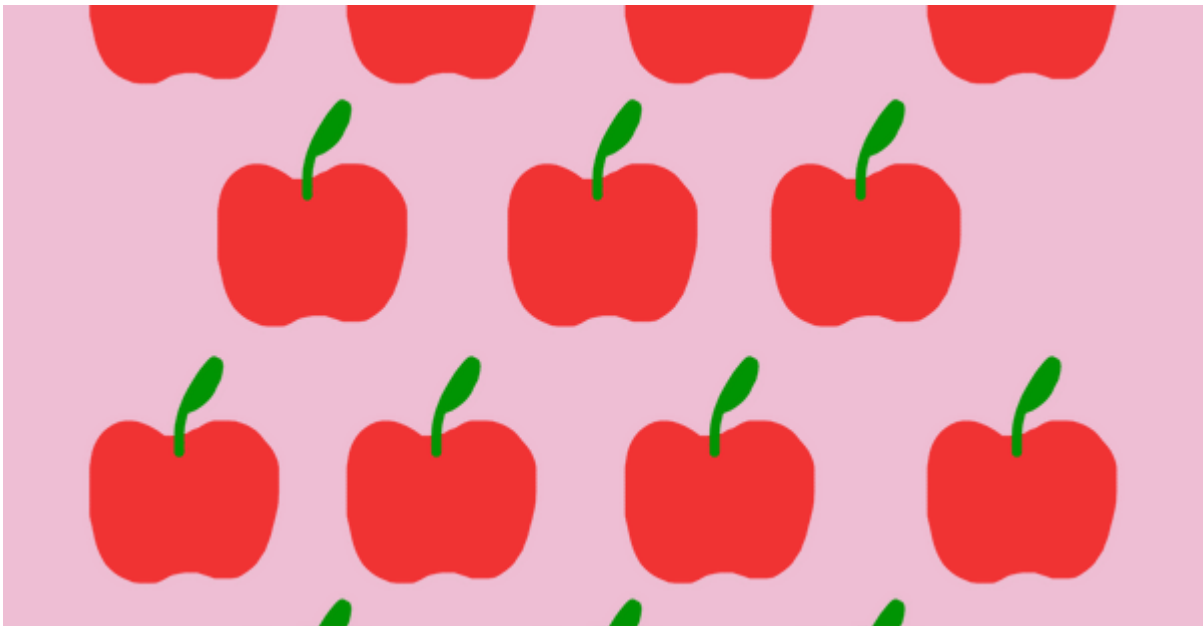
While brushing and flossing are the most important steps to keeping your breath smelling fresh, there are also some foods and drinks that have a sweetening effect. Peck at these before you pucker up.



Green Tea

Many people rave about bright green [parsley](#) as a perfect follow-up to a garlic-perfumed meal. But this frilly herb doesn't compare to another verdant breath-freshener: green tea.

This soothing drink steeps with [antioxidants called polyphenols](#), which can deter the growth of bad breath-causing bacteria. Green tea also neutralizes stinky sulfur compounds, making it the best thing to order after your delicious dish of [Chinese-style garlic green beans](#). Plus, it may improve [brain function and physical performance](#) — a good combo for a good date.



## Apples

Polyphenols are also the anti-halitosis heroes found in [apples](#). They make pungent sulfur compounds lie down and roll over — so you won't have “dog breath”! According to a study from [Ohio State University](#), the polyphenols and enzymes in apples are particularly powerful in taming the scent of garlic (try combining this odd couple in a [recipe for sautéed chicken](#)).

After dinner, give yourself a Granny Smith grin: Green apples contain the most malic acid, which naturally removes surface stains from teeth, leaving you with a whiter smile *and* more welcoming breath. 🍏

## Spinach

Go ahead and dig into that irresistible basket of [garlic knots](#), but enjoy a spinach salad at the same time. [Spinach is also filled with polyphenols](#), but it works its bad breath–busting magic best when it’s eaten at the same time as garlic. That’s not too hard to do, since [garlic and spinach](#) are natural meal-time mates.

Just be sure to break out your floss afterward because, um, having spinach in your gnashers is not likely to lead to luscious kisses (fresh breath or not!).



## Yogurt

When you eat a cup of unsweetened yogurt, it's like the sheriff's come to town in the Wild West bacterial shoot-out that is your mouth. The active cultures in yogurt, such as *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Streptococcus thermophilus*, wear the white hats and show those nasty, stinky bacteria some law and order.

A [Japanese study](#) showed that consuming 6 ounces of plain yogurt every day for six weeks reduced odor-causing hydrogen sulfide levels in 80% of the participants. Plaque and gum disease also decreased. So eat some [raita](#) with your Indian feast or add unsweetened yogurt to your breakfast nibbles. When you do, feel free to whistle the [theme song](#) to “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.”

## Water

Good ol' H<sub>2</sub>O, how we love you. Water makes life miserable for the [anaerobic bacteria](#) that cause bad breath. That's because [these particular microbes thrive in a dry mouth](#), free of oxygen or cleansing saliva. When you drink water, not only do you give your body what it needs to produce more saliva, with its antibacterial compounds, but you also wash away bits of food that can rot and lead to horrible halitosis. Ew.

A 2016 study in the [International Journal of Dental Hygiene](#) revealed that drinking a glass of water right when you wake up can help “remove up to 60% of the substances which contribute to bad breath.” That is, until you sip your morning coffee. So rise, rinse, and then later, brush and floss to make sure your a.m. breath is as sweet as your sunrise smile.



Smoocherific breath is included with our two NEW Valentine's Day sets! The **Chocolate-Covered Strawberries Gift Set** combines fan-favorite Dark Chocolate and Pure Strawberry Cocofloss with an antioxidant-rich, decadent Raaka dark chocolate bar.

Our **24-piece Cocograms Kit** has all you need to woo hearts (and brighten smiles) this Valentine's Day, with two dozen Cocofloss minis, glitter heart stickers, and love notes featuring Lilikoi, the Cocofloss piglet. Hogs and kisses! 