



Halitosis - a brief communication

Halitose - uma breve comunicação

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ABSTRACT

“Health starts with the mouth”, is a well-known cliché. Teeth and other oral structures, such as the tongue and mucosa, need very careful cleaning to remain free of pathologies. Halitosis or bad breath is a problem that can have different etiologies (e.g., poor oral hygiene and digestive problems). It can have numerous consequences, the main one being social, since living with a person who has bad breath is very unpleasant. Poor hygiene is one of the main factors that cause bad breath. The benefits of excellent oral hygiene include good general health, disease prevention, pleasant breath, and easier social interaction with others. The purpose of this brief communication is to instruct health professionals and patients about oral hygiene, focusing mainly on tongue hygiene that is often neglected among people.

Keywords: Halitosis, Mad breath, Oral disease, Tongue.

1 BRIEF COMMUNICATION

Halitosis (or visibly unpleasant breath or bad oral breath) is derived from the Latin word “halitus” which means “breath” (Ortiz and Filippi, 2021). Genuine halitosis can be classified as physiological (transient halitosis), due to nocturnal hyposalivation and lifestyle (e.g., use of antidepressant medications that reduce salivation, consumption of foods and drinks with strong odors, low-carbohydrate diets, and smoking), or pathological (persistent halitosis), mainly due to bacterial activity (e.g., due to caries, periodontal disease, etc.). Pathological halitosis is subclassified into oral or extra-oral (e.g., respiratory and gastric pathologies) (Scully and Greenman, 2012). In addition to genuine halitosis, there is pseudo halitosis, which is when the individual does not have halitosis, but believes he has this problem (Scully and Greenman, 2012).

Despite the previously reported classification, the main cause of halitosis is the decomposition of organic matter by anaerobic bacteria (Coelho Dal Rio et al., 2007; Scully and



Greenman,2012). In addition, the oral cavity is the main site of halitosis (Scully and Greenman,2012). Hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) and methyl mercaptan (CH₃SH) are the main volatile components that generate bad oral breath (Scully and Greenman,2012).

The main treatment against halitosis is related to adequate oral hygiene, through brushing and flossing, oral antiseptics and tongue scraper (Machado et al., 2008). The benefits of excellent oral hygiene include good oral and general health and pleasant breath. It is worth remembering that halitosis generates a social problem of great repercussion, as it can inhibit a person from approaching another for a more intimate dialogue (Ortiz and Filippi, 2021).

Nocturnal oral hygiene, performed before going to sleep, requires thorough brushing after proper flossing. The dental floss must be thin and waxed, and must not fray, as this is a predicative that there are retentions caused by dental restorations damaged over time or poorly made. The bristles of toothbrushes must be soft or extra soft, as the gingival tissue must be preserved, preventing damage to it and bleeding. Also, bleeding during brushing can be due to periodontal pockets, which can increase in depth if there is no periodontal treatment. Oral rinses can be used to complement oral hygiene. Tongue hygiene is also a very important factor, which is often neglected among people or performed incorrectly (Pedrazzi et al.,2004).

The bad smell of oral origin is mainly due to microbes that reside on the back of the tongue (Scully and Greenman,2012). When an individual cleans his tongue, he usually uses a toothbrush with soft bristles. This type of method may not be sufficient for effective cleaning due to the malleability of the brush bristles, which cannot adequately remove food debris from the tongue. On the other hand, copper-based tongue scrapers can effectively clean the tongue. The technique of using the metal tongue scraper (Cu) is simple and it can be easily disinfected and even sterilized. Cu has the advantage of being a fundamental metal in the human body and can be found in many organs.

Pedrazzi et al., 2004 reports that tongue coating is the major cause of halitosis of oral origin and does not receive adequate attention from medical and dental health professionals (Pedrazzi et al.,2004). Thus, dentists and other health professionals must pay attention to the hygiene of their patients' tongues. It is worth noting that during the night salivation is reduced, favoring microbial growth on the poorly cleaned tongue and, consequently, halitosis.



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