

Have you noticed bad breath behind your face covering?

Have you suddenly noticed that you have bad breath? Typically, we tend not to be conscious of how our breath smells on a daily basis, especially if following a regular oral routine of brushing and flossing. There are of course exceptions – when you have had your morning coffee, eaten something spicy or laden with garlic; salads with raw onions? At one time or another we have all become aware that the food we eat can come with an odour risk!

The wearing of cloth face coverings may help prevent those of us who do not know we have the Corona virus, from spreading it to others. This brings a new set of behaviours and discoveries! In the first instance, after learning how to correctly use the covering you will probably notice that you can smell your own breath behind the face covering, and there might be an odour which may not be so pleasant. Bad breath (halitosis) can be caused by bacteria in your mouth and can be addressed by a good oral hygiene routine. It's simple to keep your mouth clean and healthy, brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and spend 2-3 minutes doing so. This extra time, without rushing will help improve your oral health and can support feelings of wellbeing, so you can also look on it as part of your daily mindfulness routine!

It is not recommended to use mouthwash straight after brushing as you are only rinsing away the fluoride (from the toothpaste) in your mouth which helps prevent tooth decay. It can be useful between brushings but not as substitute for brushing your teeth. Choose a different time to use mouthwash, such as after lunch.

It is good practice to floss daily, not only to get food out from between your teeth, but to reduce gum disease and bad breath by removing plaque that forms along the gumline. Have you tried out interdental brushes? These can be used instead of flossing. Insert the brush gently between your teeth, it should fit snugly, but not too tight, your dentist/dental hygienist can advise you how to use these brushes best. Never use a pin or toothpick, they can damage the gums, leading to infection.

Did you know that oral bacteria and food particles get trapped in your tongue? Add tongue brushing to your daily routine to also help keep your mouth fresh.

Poor oral hygiene is the main cause of bad breath, but there are other factors that can cause it too, such as gum disease, dry mouth, sinusitis, or an underlying health condition. If it persists you should talk to your dentist, it is important to visit your dentist for a check-up at least once a year.

So, remember, for fresh breath under your face covering, create a positive daily routine by brushing twice a day, floss regularly and don't forget to brush your tongue! Drink lots of water and reduce your intake of sugary foods and drinks. You can check www.dentalhealth.ie for lots more helpful tips!

Guidance on face coverings:

Wearing a face covering is now mandatory on public transport and will also be required in shops and shopping centres. It is also recommended in situations where it is difficult to practise social distancing **(It is important to note that some people are unable to wear face coverings for health reasons and should not be judged)**.

From an oral hygiene point of view, never share a face covering with someone else to prevent catching cold sores or if you suffer with them to spreading it to someone else.

If wearing one, it is still necessary to do the important things to prevent the spread of the Corona virus. These include, washing hands properly and often, covering mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing and sneezing, not touching eyes, nose or mouth if hands are not clean, and social distancing (keeping at least 2 metres away from other people).

Detailed information is available here <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/#how-to-use-a-cloth-face-covering-properly>