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## Now that really stinks! Scientists blame bug for bad breath

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Filed Under: [Jane Weaver](#)

By Jane Weaver

There's no question that humans are smelly creatures — from our stinky feet to our putrid arm pits. There's not much we can do except scrub with soap and mask our odors with deodorant.

But if the malodorous stench is coming from your mouth, scientists are closing in on the cause. Blame a bug —*Solobacterium moorei*, to be specific.

Researchers at the State University Of New York at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine have identified a tongue bacteria that [they say is associated with severe bad breath](#), Reuters reported.

Not much is known about the bacteria strain, although the researchers said it originally comes from, *gag*, human feces.

So it seems Dr. Billy Goldberg was right after all when he blamed the “poop fairy” for bad breath (back when [Body Odd was a podcast](#)).

Halitosis can be a [sign of a medical problem](#) such as liver or kidney disease, but even when it’s not that serious, it’s embarrassing and distressing — and often equally awful for innocent bystanders. It can kill your love life and make life miserable for your co-workers.

In a small study of people with chronic bad breath and a group without, the researchers collected culture samples by scraping an area of the tongue’s surface. They also used a halimeter ([bad breath machine](#)) to rank the participants’ breath from “no appreciable odor” to “extremely foul.” They found the *S. moorei* bacteria in every one of the participants who had halitosis. Only a few of the subjects who didn’t have halitosis had the bacteria, and all of them had a gum infection, which can eventually cause halitosis.

Men were more likely to have the bacteria than women, although it wasn’t clear why.

Most people worry about bad breath sometimes, although the researchers estimated that fewer than a third actually do have hard-core halitosis.

With the finding, the researchers are hoping that new treatments can be developed to help rid us of the stinky breath scourge. So maybe someday you’ll be freed from constantly chewing breath mints or compulsively cupping your hands around your mouth and nose to see if you offend.

Regular bad breath is usually caused by volatile sulfur compounds, or simple bacteria. It’s also connected to dry mouth or respiratory tract infections, sinus infections or gastrointestinal problems.

If you don’t actually have *S. moorei*, but just want to get rid of simple morning mouth, there are some things you can do (and should, for the sake of fellow man).

Commercial mouthwashes don’t do the trick for long, although brushing your teeth for several minutes and scraping your tongue helps. [Drinking green tea may also help control it](#).

“You have bad breath” can be tough to say to someone you like. Maybe now it’ll be easier: just say, “Excuse me, I think you have *Solobacterium moorei*. Would you like some gum?”

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Insights and ruminations on the strangeness of all things medical, pharmaceutical and biological from the twisted minds that brought you the bestsellers “Why Do Men Have Nipples?” and “Why Do Men Fall Asleep After Sex?”

Authors [Mark Leyner](#) and [Dr. Billy Goldberg](#) — ably assisted by msnbc.com writers and editors — will muse upon the wonderfully weird human body and the medical curiosities that make you go huh, ewww or ouch! Looking for informed, unhinged meditations on everything from dubious diseases to recipes for ersatz mucous? Well, this is the place.

If you have a question for Mark and Billy, e-mail [The Body Odd](#).

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