

# Get a *whiff* of this!

## What mask breath is telling you

August 6th was National Fresh Breath Day 2020! Perhaps you missed the memo, but since you're wearing a mask these days, one thing you haven't missed is the smell of your own breath.



There are some health drawbacks to wearing masks, including increasing a fraction of carbon dioxide we are supposed to be exhaling. And if you're masking during a COVID infection you may be increasing your viral load by rebreathing the very virus your body is trying to shed. But evaluating the smell of your breath, up-close-and-personal, is a good thing! It can give you telltale signs of health or danger.

Your breath should be odorless. If it's sweet and fruity it can be a sign of [diabetic ketoacidosis](#). And if it's sour, or stinky, it could be Gingivitis (infected gums) or Periodontitis (infected gums and bone). All smells deserve immediate attention.

Let's talk about "perio breath." The mouth is a home to more than 700 strains of bacteria, many are harmless or even helpful. But a handful of strains, the ones primarily at work in [periodontal infections](#), are really dangerous. These bugs don't just threaten our ability to maintain teeth, but also our systemic health. They seep into the gum tissue, circulate through the blood stream and travel to organs far and wide. Periodontal pathogens are now linked to 57 other diseases and have been shown to cause heart attacks and strokes! Their presence is even considered a serious risk in your ability to survive a COVID infection.

"Perio" is a super prevalent disease and often goes untreated. Half of us have it by age 30 and 70% by age 70. Unfortunately, it doesn't hurt because if



it did, we'd seek treatment. My advice is, be sure to choose a periodontally astute dental team, where your hygienist and dentist perform a perio examination at each preventive visit and keep you informed.

Today, identifying the most harmful perio bugs is as easy as spitting into a cup and sending the sample for study. Within a few days we can identify individual strains and suggest bug-specific antimicrobial treatment recommendations, in combination with traditional scaling and better home care.

Dry mouth is another fresh breath-stealer. Since over 400 of the most common drugs (prescription, over-the-counter, and recreational) decrease your saliva flow, we've seen a rapid rise in fungal/yeast infections. Nine fungal strains can be identified in saliva, although not all of them easily remedied.

In short, if your mouth is parched and your breath is foul, it's a definite sign of deteriorating health.

Beyond bad breath and fungal overgrowth, dry mouth often results in active tooth decay ([Caries Disease](#)) and enamel erosion. To learn more, start with your dental team, and make sure they want to work collaboratively with your medical team to uncover the root causes of your systemic issues, address them head-on, and hopefully help you de-medicate.



*Dr. Susan Maples is a dentist in Holt. She is also a speaker, health educator and author of [Blabbermouth](#). Learn more at [drsusanmaples.com](#) or call (517) 694.0353.*

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