Bad Cat Breath: Causes, Treatment, And Prevention

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Published February 10, 2026
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You adore your sweet kitty and love spending your evenings together. But lately, you've noticed an unpleasant odor coming from their mouth. You don't want to stay away, but their bad cat breath makes it hard to get close.

What's causing your cat's breath to smell this way? Is there anything you can do about it, or are you doomed to keep your distance forever?

To help answer your questions, let's look at some common causes of bad cat breath. We'll also examine treatment options and discuss how you can prevent this problem in the future.

What Causes Your Cat's Bad Breath?

Stinky cat breath can be caused by many things. To help you narrow down the possibilities, here are the most common causes.

Periodontal Disease

When plaque and tartar build up on your cat's teeth, it can cause periodontal disease(open in new tab). If this occurs, the bacteria in their mouth can cause infections and tooth decay.

Once your cat's teeth decay, you'll notice a sulfur-like smell that might remind you of rotten eggs. If left untreated, the bacteria can enter your cat's bloodstream and cause even more serious health problems.

Fortunately, you can help prevent this with GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treats. Their crunchy texture, delicious taste, and quality ingredients can help keep your cat's teeth clean to reduce plaque buildup.

Stuck Foreign Objects

It's not uncommon for cats to accidentally get things stuck in their mouths. If something gets lodged between their teeth and stays there for a while, a bad smell can develop. You may also notice other signs, like drooling or difficulty eating.

While anything your cat chews on could potentially get stuck, here are the most likely culprits:

- Chunks of food
- Pieces of hair, string, or yarn
- Thin pieces of plastic (such as from a tag)
- A bead
- Stuffing from a toy

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Gastrointestinal Problems

Bad breath could also be a sign that your cat is having tummy troubles. In addition to the odor, you'll likely notice other signs, such as vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, and changes in behavior.

Many different conditions can lead to gastrointestinal distress, including hairballs, eating non-edible objects, and food allergies.

Health Problems

Some underlying health problems can cause halitosis, or bad breath. These include:

- Diabetes
- Infections
- Ulcers
- Liver diseases

You'll need to take your cat to the vet if you suspect they have one of these conditions.

Eating Something Smelly

If your cat has been scavenging around in the garbage or eating something dead, it could make their breath temporarily foul. If you've seen your kitty getting into mischief and smell something, wait a day or two to see if it clears up.

This is also a good time to consider incorporating GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treats. At that point, if the smell is gone, you can chalk it up to their curious nature. However, if it lingers, there's likely something else going on.

Treating Your Cat's Bad Breath

Since so many things can make your cat's breath stink, it's essential to get an accurate diagnosis. This usually requires a trip to the vet for a thorough examination.

Get An Oral Exam

The vet will likely start with an oral exam(open in new tab). This is usually done in four stages.

Stage #1

First, the vet will ask you questions about your cat and their behavior. They may also inquire about the feline's diet and your concerns about their breath. This is a great time to ask questions.

Stage #2

The next stage involves a physical exam. During this part of the appointment, the vet checks your cat's head and neck visually while their mouth is closed. The vet may palpate

these areas as well, looking for any abnormalities contributing to the bad breath.

Stage #3

For the third stage, the vet will attempt to look in your cat's mouth. If all goes well, they can examine the gums, tongue, and teeth for foreign objects, signs of periodontal disease, or infection.

Stage #4

Of course, cats don't always cooperate. That's why the fourth exam stage typically involves general anesthesia. Since your cat won't be fighting, your vet can carefully examine their mouth, take x-rays if necessary, and perform a complete cleaning.

Once the exam is complete, your veterinarian will discuss their findings and provide treatment recommendations. For instance, if your cat had an infection, they may need antibiotics to clear it up.

Talk To Your Vet About Other Causes

If nothing seems unusual about your cat's mouth, your veterinarian may propose other tests. For instance, they may suggest getting some blood work or imaging, such as CT scans or ultrasounds, to check on your cat's kidneys and liver.

Discuss each test with your veterinarian so you understand what is going on with your kitty's health.

Preventing Bad Cat Breath

While you may not be able to prevent every occurrence of smelly cat breath, the following steps can help keep things fresh.

Establish A Home Oral Care Routine

Like humans, cats need regular oral care. A simple at-home routine can help keep your cat's mouth healthy. First, pick up a soft toothbrush. Since cats' mouths are so small, you'll want one specially designed for felines.

You should also buy cat toothpaste or gel. It comes in cat-friendly flavors like poultry and fish. Ingredients in human toothpaste can harm your pet, so don't try to share your tube.

Once they get the supplies, many pet owners make a big mistake. They put some cat

toothpaste on the brush and jam it into their cat's mouth. Unfortunately, this attempt often scares your kitty. It could also make them resist all future tries.

To avoid this, go slowly and use positive reinforcement. Initially, put a dab of cat toothpaste on your finger and touch it to their mouth. Then, reward them with a tasty treat. Do this for a few days until they associate the toothpaste with something good.

Next, put the toothpaste onto the toothbrush. Gently touch your cat's mouth with it before giving them the treat. Continue taking baby steps until your cat tolerates you cleaning their teeth this way. As they adjust, gradually increase the time you spend brushing.

Ideally, you'll want to do this daily. However, any amount of brushing helps reduce plaque and tartar build-up, so don't feel bad if you can only do it a couple of times a week.

Use GREENIES™ Dental Cat Treats

If you're looking for an easier way to keep plaque and tartar at bay, give your cat a few Feline GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treats & Chews twice a day. These treats are made from natural ingredients and come in flavors cats love, like oven-roasted chicken and shrimp.

Our treats have a crunchy texture to help clean your cat's teeth. They're designed to reduce tartar buildup and keep your kitty's breath smelling nice.

Since each treat has only two calories, you can give them to your cat anytime without worrying about weight gain. Feel free to use them as a reward or pop a few into their regular kitty chow! (Just remember that treats should make up no more than 10% of your pet's daily calories.)

Schedule Annual Exams

As helpful as home care is, it can't replace professional cleanings. Get your cat to the vet for a dental checkup and cleaning at least once a year.

This can help ensure any oral problems are caught early, before they lead to bad breath or other trouble.

Cat-Proof Your House

Cats can be naughty. To reduce the chances of them getting a non-edible stuck in their mouth, take time to cat-proof your home.

Make sure that dangling strings, rubber bands, and other small objects are kept away. And always be on the lookout for things your cat might chew on.

You'll also want to inspect their toys regularly. If you notice any damage, repair or replace them right away. Otherwise, they could start eating pieces of it, which isn't good for their breath (or the rest of them).

Feed Your Cat Quality Food

If your kitty frequently deals with gastrointestinal issues, a diet change might be worthwhile. Your veterinarian can help you find the best brand for your cat. You'll likely want to look for a formula high in animal protein and low in carbs.

The type of food is also important. Some veterinarians think dry kibble is better for your cat's teeth since it can help remove plaque. However, the studies aren't yet conclusive on this topic, so if your cat prefers wet food, it's OK to offer that if your vet approves.

Improve Your Cat's Breath With GREENIES™

If your cat has bad breath, it may indicate an underlying problem. That's why regular oral exams are so important. After inspecting your cat's mouth, the vet can pinpoint the cause of the odor and recommend personalized treatment options.

Between visits, keep your cat's breath fresh by brushing their teeth and giving them GREENIES™ Cat Dental Treats daily. These treats are formulated to reduce tartar buildup. Plus, they contain essential nutrients that can help keep your bundle of fur healthy.

To keep your cat coming back for more, stock up on a variety of GREENIES™ treats. Try different flavors, like tuna and catnip, to keep your feline friend purring in delight.

Happy cuddles!

References

VCA Hospitals(open in new tab)

Natural Library of Medicine(open in new tab)

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