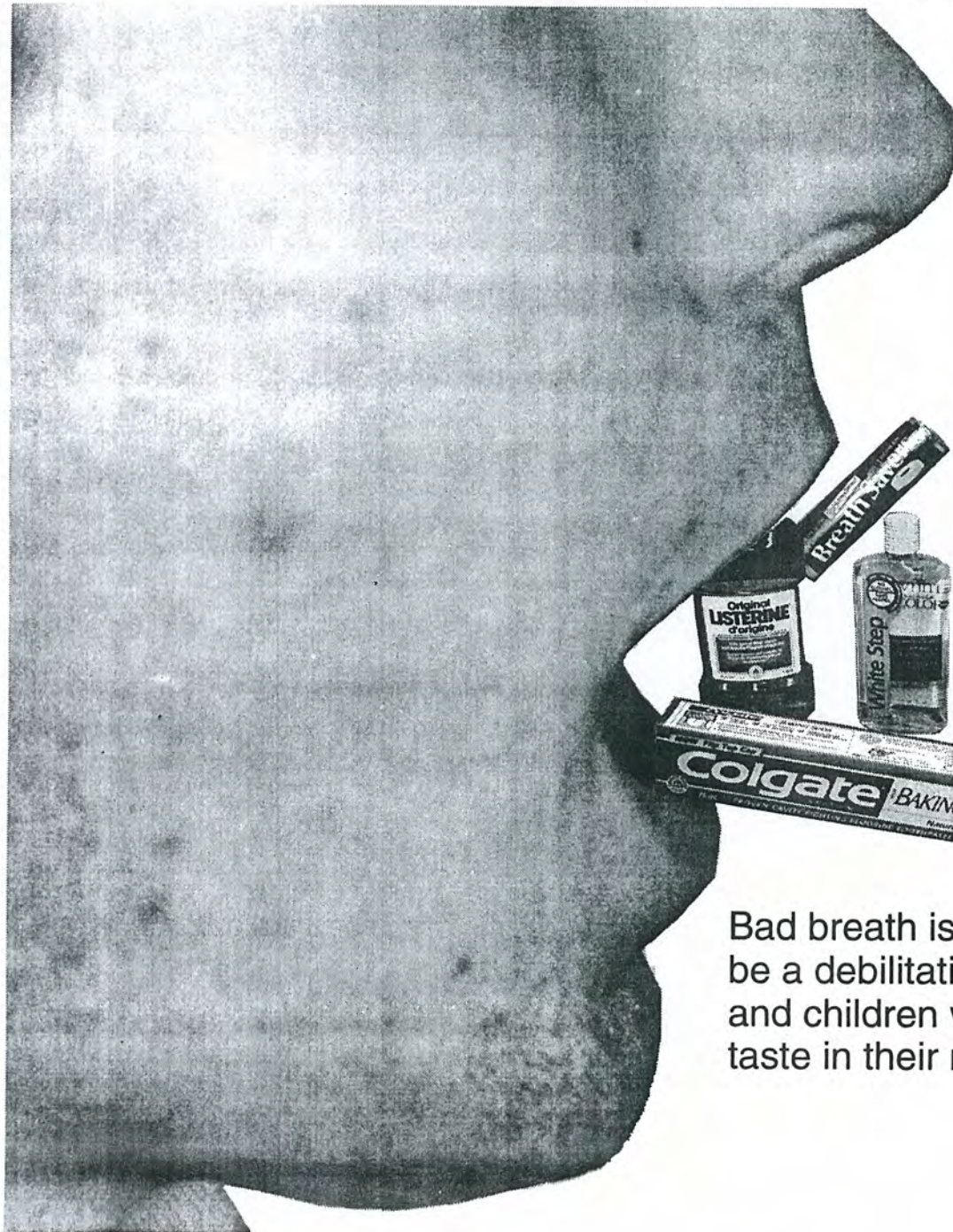




LIFE



Bad breath is no laughing matter. In fact, it can be a debilitating condition for the men, women and children who just can't get rid of that bad taste in their mouths.

Horrible halitosis



By CHERYL BAUSLAUGH
Reformer Lifestyle Editor

It sounds so easy on the television commercials. Just a swig of that best-selling mouthwash and bad breath will be nothing more than just a bad memory.

But the reality is something quite different.

For men, women and children with chronic bad breath, the social embarrassment and loss of self-esteem can be devastating.

"It's probably the most debilitating condition there is," said Anne Bosy, co-founder of the Fresh Breath Clinic in Toronto.

Children with bad breath are teased on the playground and often rejected by playmates who think they have poor oral hygiene habits. Adults may shy away from social contacts and do poorly in their career because they're just not popular to be around.

"I had one patient who'd had the problem since he was seven years old," Bosy said. "It changed his life.

"He kept changing jobs because he was so embarrassed about his breath. He told me he'd get into an elevator and hold his breathe because he was afraid to breathe out. I've had other people tell me the same thing."

Bosy, who has a master of science degree in oral malodour, became involved with the puzzle of halitosis quite by accident. She was teaching at

George Brown College when the Faculty of Dentistry at nearby University of Toronto approached her about doing a research paper on bad breath.

"I found it a very interesting and compelling area. I decided to do my master's on it."

She operated the Halitosis Assessment Clinic at U of T for three years before opening the Fresh Breath Clinic with Dr. Julian Geller, a specialist in dentistry for children, in 1993.

"There are a lot of people out there with this problem."

While everyone experiences bad breath at some point or another in their lives, people with chronic halitosis have a bad taste in their mouths all the time, no matter what they do.

"These people have it all the time. It never leaves them. They chew gum all the time, they gargle, they brush their teeth five and six times a day and still, it's there."

By the time they come to the breath clinic, people often have badly bruised egos and they've tried all the traditional "cures" — from breath mints to mouthwashes.

"Most mouthwashes that you buy in the drugstore don't work. They just mask the problem. They don't kill off bacteria."

What causes bad breath? Often it's related to a specific food or improper brushing. But it can also indicate an infection in the mouth.

"Impeccable oral hygiene is important," said Simcoe dentist Dr. Steven Malo. "You should brush the tongue and palate as well as the teeth. A lot of debris can build up on the tongue."

And then there's morning breath — that awful taste in your mouth when you first wake up. The cause is simple: less saliva is secreted in the mouth during sleep and bacteria proliferates. Most of the time, a thorough brushing is all it takes to make breath kissing sweet.

But if you're looking for a mouthwash, Listerine is probably the best choice because it will reduce the bacterial count in your mouth, temporarily.

"The old standby is the best — if you can put up with the taste!" Dr. Malo said.

Consulting with your dentist is the first line of attack but where there is no oral decay or

disease, it's a good idea to check with your physician.

"Sometimes it can be a digestive problem — not just having garlic for lunch but what we call an acid stomach," said

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