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Episode 21: Should You Squelch the Belch?

I can believe I ate that hall and I can believe I ate that whole thing.

Is it better to belt the belch and bear the shame than squelch the belch and bear the pain and have constant sour breath Find out the answer on today's episode of this old tooth.

Hello everyone. You are listening to episode number 12 of this old tooth, a podcast devoted to providing you with honest agenda-free information about how you can get and keep a beautiful healthy smile for life. I am your host, Dr. Lisa Germain. Today I will be taking my fifth small bite in my 10 part series about bad breath, its causes, and what you can do about it. Acid reflux is also known as heartburn, acid, indigestion, or pyrosis. This happens when stomach contents such as undigested food, regurgitated bile and stomach acids flow back up into the esophagus. That is the tube that connects your stomach to your mouth. This can create a burning pain in your lower chest, particularly if you are trying to squelch the belch. Some people get periodic episodes after eating spicy or acidic foods, and as a result, have very sour breath and a bitter taste in their mouths.

In college, I heard a friend call it vending machine stomach because he woke up with a half-eaten moon pie stuck to his face after a night of too much partying, realizing that was the remnants of his dinner the night before, which also included Skittles, Cool Ranch, Doritos Lemonheads and fried pork rinds. While singular episodes here and there are common, some people suffer from chronic acid reflux. Chronic acid reflux, also known as gastric esophageal reflux disease or GERD is a medical condition. The primary cause of chronic acid reflux in most people is a faulty or relaxed lower esophageal sphincter. This is a valve-like muscle, like a thick rubber band that forms a barrier between your esophagus and your stomach. When it works appropriately, it opens when you swallow to let food enter your stomach and then it closes tightly. However, when you have a faulty valve, it remains open and it allows acids to flow back

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into your throat and ultimately these acids will pool in your mouth. If you have this condition, you have a real reason to worry about having chronic bad breath. In addition, if you have stomach acid constantly flowing up into your mouth, it will cause severe erosion of your teeth. The most common symptoms of GERD are acid indigestion and heartburn. You may frequently burp and feel bloated and acid in your esophagus can make it spasm and that is what causes the pain and the feeling of tightness in the chest. Sometimes it is so bad that it can feel like you're having a heart attack. Now, this would not be a time for self-diagnosis. If you have pain in your chest, you should always seek medical attention or go to the emergency room. Do not assume it is GERD. Let the physicians there make the diagnosis for you just in case.

There are a variety of factors that can weaken your esophagus sphincter. These include over-eating, being overweight, pregnancy, smoking or regular exposure to secondhand smoke vaping and chewing tobacco as well as nitrates and other medications. In addition, you could have a hiatal hernia that's causing the problem and this is when part of your stomach protrudes into the diaphragm muscle. Another thing that can cause chronic GERD is anxiety. So if you feel that you are as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs, it may be time to find some way to relax. If you take medication and developed symptoms of reflux, speak to your physician. They can discuss switching the medication perhaps to find one that does not have this side effect. However, don't stop taking a prescription medication without consulting your doctor first. So very, very important. The good news is that you can make some lifestyle changes that can help prevent reflux, which can help your breath stay fresh and protect your teeth as well.

First, you should quit smoking if you're currently a smoker, quit vaping and quit chewing tobacco. To add insult to injury, these cause bad breath by themselves and dry your mouth out as well. Plus nicotine products cause you're lower esophageal sphincter to relax, allowing acid reflux into your esophagus. Smoking also increases your risk of cancer, of the mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, liver, and colon, all of which can cause bad breath. Modifying how and what you eat can help relieve GERD symptoms and bad breath. Many foods can aggravate acid reflux by relaxing the sphincter or increasing acidity in the stomach. Some of the more common food triggers include fried or fatty foods, citrus, chocolate, coffee, carbonated beverages, and drinks containing alcohol. Eat foods that are rich in fiber to fight bad breath. Fiber helps digestion runs smoothly so that reflux and obstruction are less likely to occur.

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Fibrous foods can also help you to feel full longer and may help you to maintain your weight. GERD has been linked to being overweight, so talk to your doctor about losing weight to relieve acid reflux and heartburn. Losing excess weight can decrease your risk of developing a hiatal hernia, which can also increase your GERD symptoms. Now it's important to drink plenty of water throughout the day to refresh your breath. Water is less likely than other beverages to upset your stomach or weaken your lower esophageal sphincter. It also helps wash away bacteria that can lead to bad breath and be sure to choose still water instead of sparkling. As carbonation can increase heartburn symptoms in some people. Other adjustments to counter GERD symptoms could include waiting at least two to three hours to lie down after you eat. Putting a six-inch board or a wedge pillow under the head of your bed to raise your torso and hence reduce the pressure on your lower esophageal sphincter and eating smaller meals throughout the day rather than three large meals.

There are several types of over the counter and prescription-strength medications that can be used to treat GERD, including histamine blockers, proton pump inhibitors, and acids such as calcium carbonate, which are Tums or aluminum and magnesium hydroxide, also called Mylanta. Some chewable antacids include breath-freshening ingredients and will relieve both symptoms at once. Other GERD medications and drugs can lead to dry mouth. Now, dry mouth occurs when your salivary glands don't produce enough saliva. You can find out more about this if you go back into the archives of my podcast and listen to episode number nine about Dry Mouth, When Spit Does Not Happen. This can be very uncomfortable and it can also cause horrendous breath. Your doctor can help you manage the combination of medications you are taking and recommend solutions for the side effects if your new medication reduces your GERD symptoms because as a dry mouth, instead ask your doctor about solutions for the dry mouth. Sometimes medication side effects have simple solutions and can be managed more easily than those that cause the acid reflux. It's important to know that finding the right balance of medications is possible.

And now for a fun fact, in 1986 John Pennington won the national spelling bee by spelling odontology, which means toothache. If you have any questions related to your dental health, please visit my website <http://www.thisoldtooth.com> and go to the contact me section and wherever you are listening, I hope you will subscribe and tell your friends. On my next show, I will discuss restrictive diets such as the currently popular ketogenic diet can cause your breath

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to be so bad, it could melt the paint off the walls and what you can do about it. Until then, thank you for listening and remember, be true to your teeth or they will be false to you.

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