

Bad breath in cats

Overview

- Bad breath (halitosis) is not normal, even in older cats.
- Bad breath often indicates an underlying medical problem.
- Take your cat for a check-up if they have bad breath.

General information and causes



Bad breath often indicates an underlying problem such as:

- **Dental disease** – a common cause of bad breath in cats.
- **Kidney disease** - can cause breath to smell like ammonia (similar to bleach).
- **Something stuck in the mouth** - if something is stuck in your cat's mouth or throat (such as a bone), it will start to smell after a while. You may also notice your cat pawing at their mouth or face.
- **Airway infections** - often cause bad breath.
- **Diabetes** - can cause breath to smell sweet (similar to pear drops or nail polish remover).

- **Diet** - certain smelly cat foods can cause bad breath.
- **Gut problems** - a gut infection or blockage will often make the breath smell bad, but you are likely to notice other signs such as diarrhoea, vomiting or stomach pain before noticing bad breath.
- **Liver disease** - can cause foul, sweet, musty breath.
- **Mouth cancer** - cancers in the mouth can become infected and smelly.

Other symptoms to look out for

It's important to tell you vet about any other symptoms you have noticed, such as:

- Tooth or gum disease
- Excessive drooling
- Weight loss
- Eating less or nothing at all
- Difficulty eating or dropping food
- Difficulty swallowing
- Lethargy (low energy/sleeping more than usual)

When to contact your vet

Bad breath is not normal, even in an older cat. Book an appointment with your vet if your cat has bad breath. Your vet will be able to fully, and safely examine your cat's mouth, which may not be easy for you to do at home.

Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment by visiting www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility

Published: March 2020