

Good Housekeeping

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Good Housekeeping
Institute
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TOP 20
RECIPES OF
THE YEAR

Boost your
confidence for
a happier life

Are you
ready to
be kissed?

Feel-good
fashion

Why men
LOVE older
women

Is **VIAGRA**
the
LAST thing
you need?

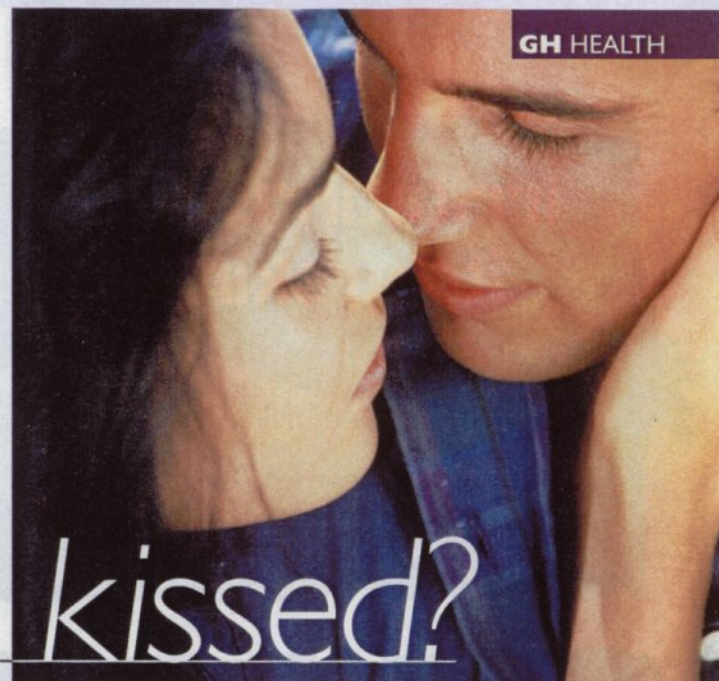


Let's celebrate!

GREAT NEW YEAR ISSUE

Whether it is in passion or a friendly 'mwah', who wants to kiss someone with bad breath, a mouth ulcer or a cold sore? Make sure your mouth's socially acceptable, says Anne Woodham

Are you ready to be kissed?



GH HEALTH

Does my breath smell?' said my son, 22. 'Hhuuugggh.' 'Toothpaste,' I said, 'and do I also detect an underlying aroma of coffee? A hint of wholemeal toast, a soupçon of butter?' 'Hnnnh,' he said, and went out.

Only your nearest and dearest can be trusted to reveal the truth of halitosis – smelly breath. Oh the horror: Are you a social outcast, causing others to avert their faces in disgust? Quick, puff into your cupped hand for telltale odours.

'Actually, that doesn't work very well,' says dental surgeon Dr Mervyn Druian, who runs the London Breath Centre. 'You get a better idea if you lick the inside of your wrist, wait a few seconds, then sniff it.'

What to do about...

bad breath

Six out of 10 people in the UK suffer from chronic bad breath at some time. And around 90% of cases are due to oral health problems. 'If you suspect bad breath, the dentist should be your first port of call,' says Dr Druian. If he can't find the cause, he'll refer you to a doctor. For a minority of people, bad breath may be due to the stomach bacterium that causes ulcers, or a symptom of something more serious.

Odoriferous mouth gases result from bacteria breaking down proteins in saliva or, more offensively, from sulphur compounds (you'll have plenty of these if your gums bleed). Yuk. If your teeth and gums are healthy but you still have an odour and it gets stronger as you talk, it may be coming from the back of the tongue – a common source of bad breath, particularly if you have a dry mouth, don't drink enough liquid,

or fast or diet excessively. Breath-freshening products are not always effective, so...

- Brush your teeth and gums properly, including behind your back teeth, at least twice a day and use an unscented dental floss.
- Clean the back of your tongue (an Eastern practice). Tongue scrapers such as Oolit (£3.49 for a pack of two; 0171-240 6005 for stockists) are dragged gently over the back of the tongue.
- Use toothpastes and mouthwashes with chlorine dioxide, such as RetarDENT toothpaste and RetarDEX oral rinse (both £7.95 from chemists), to remove sulphurous gases.
- Chew parsley, mint, cloves or fennel seeds, eat fibrous vegetables such as carrots and drink plenty of fluids – but avoid coffee.
- If you wear dentures, soak overnight in an antiseptic solution (check first with your dentist).

What to do about...

mouth ulcers

Go easy with the toothbrush – injuries from overvigorous brushing can cause mouth (aphthous) ulcers, as can acute stress, bacterial infection, allergies and, according to nutritional therapists, deficiencies in iron, folate and vitamin B12. These open sores – white or grey spots with inflamed edges – occur on the inside of the cheek, lips, gums or tongue. They're very common (particularly just before a period) and can be painful. They last from one to two weeks and are aggravated by spicy or acidic foods and smoking. Try...

- gargling with warm, salty water or an antibacterial mouthwash such as Corsodyl (£4.15, from pharmacies) to ease pain.
- an anaesthetic gel (Anbesol, £1.99; Bonjela

£2.49), a multiway treatment (Adcortyl in Orabase, £3.95) or Rinstead pastilles (£2.35).

- dabbing the ulcer with a little tea tree oil (Thursday Plantation Tea Tree Oil, £3.95, and mouthwash, £3.95, both Holland & Barrett).
- See a doctor if an ulcer fails to heal or recurs.

What to do about...

cold sores

Cold sores are deeply unkissable. Either alone or in a crusty cluster, they look horrid and are extremely contagious – if you have a cold sore, don't kiss anyone, anywhere. Caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV-1), the first attack may pass unnoticed or as flu. Afterwards, the virus lies dormant in nerve cells, awaiting its chance to recur. This could be with exposure to sunshine, wind, a cold or other infection. Telltale tingling in the lips heralds an outbreak; blisters start small, enlarge, burst and usually disappear within a week.

- Antiviral aciclovir cream is available from pharmacies (Zovirax, £5.49; Soothelip, £4.49). Doctors may also prescribe idoxuridine paint.
- When a cold sore appears, hold an ice cube wrapped in linen to it for at least 45 minutes, removing for 15 seconds every few minutes.
- Zinc, either in supplements or applied direct, seems to inhibit the growth of HSV-1. Follow a diet rich in zinc (red meat, nuts, seeds and seafood), vitamin C and bioflavonoids (found in highly coloured fruit and veg).
- Lysine, found in lamb, chicken, fish, potatoes, milk, beans and eggs, may also suppress HSV-1.

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Photographs/Tony Stone Images (posed by models)