

McCawley Periodontics

How To Get Rid Of Your Gag Reflex

To get rid of bad breath it's essential to clean the very back of your tongue. If you have a significant gag reflex, this is impossible so you need to get rid of this reflex. Getting rid of your gag reflex won't happen overnight, as it takes time for your body to desensitize itself to stimuli. But it is indeed possible, as is the case with performers who swallow swords, for example. And while you might not want to make a career out of sword-swallowing, you would benefit from not having to struggle to keep your breakfast down while you brush your teeth, CLEAN YOUR TONGUE, take your medication, or are at the dentist's office.

Your gag reflex is a natural, involuntary contraction of muscles in your throat that serves to prevent unwanted foreign objects from entering. It's an adaptation of the human body that also prevents choking.

But why does this happen? Well, it's all down to the way reflexes work.

What Are Reflexes For?

Reflexes are actions that occur involuntarily, requiring no conscious thought. They happen almost instantaneously in response to a certain stimulus and often end before the person knows what happened. A well-known example is the patellar reflex, which involves striking the base of the kneecap with a hammer. A person with healthy reflexes will instantly jerk their leg forwards.

Healthy reflexes are important because they show that the central or peripheral nervous system is working correctly. However, an overactive gag reflex is rarely useful – so let's learn how to resist it.

- **Practice desensitization.** Use a soft-bristled toothbrush to brush your tongue until you reach the point where you feel like you might gag. Gently continue to brush this area for about 10 seconds, reaching the point where you're about to gag and try to hold it back. Don't stimulate the reflex; just get close to it. Over time, you can repeat the process and reach farther back, slowly increasing the amount of time and the reach of your brush. Do this two times per day. Often the gag reflex is less sensitive in the evening so focus on cleaning you tongue more in the evening.
- **Deep breathing.** Practice gasping while cleaning the tongue.
- **Place salt** on the sides of your tongue before cleaning your tongue.
- **Try numbing the throat** with over the counter Chloraseptic spray

Conclusion: Results Take Time

Desensitizing your gag reflex takes time as you're trying to reprogram certain innate neural pathways that have been established for years. It can take a month or more. So it's important to be patient, take your time, and understand that consistency brings results.

