

# Sweet magnolia: Tree bark extract fights bad breath and tooth decay

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Magnolia bark extract shows promise for fighting bad breath when used in gum and mints. Credit: Courtesy of Michael Greenberg, Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company

“Sweet magnolia” does more than describe the fragrant blossoms of a popular evergreen tree. It also applies to magnolia bark’s effects on human breath. Scientists in Illinois are reporting that breath mints made with magnolia bark extract kill most oral bacteria that cause bad breath and tooth decay within 30 minutes. The extract could be a boon for oral health when added to chewing gum and mints, they report in a study scheduled for the Nov. 14 issue of the ACS’ *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

Consumers often turn to flavored chewing gum and mints to battle bad

breath. However, those products only temporarily mask the odor of bad breath, which is caused by bacteria. Existing anti-bacterial products for bad breath are far from ideal, with some having side effects like tooth staining.

In the new study, Minmin Tian and Michael Greenberg tested the germ-killing power of magnolia bark extract using saliva samples taken from volunteers following a regular meal. Mints containing the extract killed more than 61 percent of the germs that cause bad breath within 30 minutes, compared with only a 3.6 percent germ-kill for the same flavorless mints without the extract, the researchers say.

The extract also showed strong antibacterial activity against a group of bacteria known to cause cavities. Mints and chewing gum containing the extract may also provide a “portable oral care supplement to dentifrice (toothpaste), where brushing is not possible,” the study states.

Source: American Chemical Society

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