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## Power of the pucker

What is it about locking lips that drives us so wild?

Christy L. Breithaupt / Special to The Detroit News

It's the end of your date. It's gone well, and now you stand at your front door looking at each other with one question on your mind. He takes your hand, looks you dead in the eye and leans in. You tilt your head up, wondering if this kiss will be all you hoped for. When your lips meet, there's a flutter in your stomach, and your pulse starts to race. You try to act cool, but your mind is yelling "Yippeel!"

There is absolutely nothing in the world comparable to a good kiss. It has it all -- danger, excitement, desire -- it's something you've been practicing to perfect since you were a teenager. But, as it turns out, there is no perfect kiss -- just personal preference and good mouth hygiene.

We tend to focus on kissing around romantic celebrations, such as weddings, anniversaries and Valentine's Day, which is some two weeks away. But what is it about kissing that's so great?

William Cane, author of "The Art of Kissing Book of Questions and Answers" (St. Martin's Griffin, \$9.95), says when we kiss, endorphins are released in the brain, giving us a feeling of euphoria. These endorphins and rushing blood are what give people that post-kiss glow.

Cane decided to write his book after a memorable kissing experience. He was involved in a debate with his ex-girlfriend over whether the eyes should be open or closed during a kiss. Cane decided to take a poll to find the answer. After sending out surveys, he found that he was in the minority, only a little more than 40 percent keep their eyes open during a kiss.

"I'm an eyes-open," says Chris DiAngelo, 33, of Ann Arbor. "When I'm kissing her, I like the way she looks. She's an eyes-closed kisser, so that's kind of weird."

DiAngelo, who has been with his girlfriend for more than a year, believes that kissing is all about style. If you match the other person's style, then the kiss will be good. But, according to Cane's study, what people really want is variety.

"People have said they want flexibility and variety. They want some human warmth. They want their partner to be responsive to them," Cane says. "They like exciting kissers."

Kissing has a long history. Many anthropologists believe kissing began by the simple act of cavewomen breastfeeding their young or regurgitating food into their offspring's mouth, says Andrea Demirjian, author of "Kissing: Everything you Ever Wanted to Know About One of Life's Sweetest Pleasures" (Penguin Group, \$14)

Around 1500 B.C., kissing is referenced in Sanskrit texts much in the manner we use it today, Demirjian says. Currently, 90 percent of the world's cultures use kissing as a form of affection, though there are a few that see the practice as germ-spreading.

Americans know how we feel about kissing -- we love it.

"In Europe, it's such a part of life that they are not so preoccupied by it," Demirjian says. "We're still like teenagers, which is cute."

"I find that people's eyes just light up. People just immediately think of their own kissing and what they like about kissing," she says. "It's something that's part of our lives since we are born."

In her book, Demirjian says a good kiss comes from the mood within. But no matter your skill level, there's still one thing that can ruin any smooch. You may be able to tie a knot in a cherry stem with your tongue, but if you've got bad breath, your kiss is done for.

"I dated this girl who didn't have bad breath, but she had this weird smell that came out of her nose the whole time. It smelled like Cheetos," says Shaun Farrugia, 28, of Ypsilanti. "It was all I could think about the whole time."

Based on a London study that proved people are more hesitant to kiss when one of the people has bad breath, Dr. Harold Katz of Los Angeles set out to do a study of his own. He has a smell-o-meter machine, called the Halimeter, which measures the amount of bad breath a person has. He took his mouth-sniffer to Canada and tested people in several different cities. What he found was that in towns where the Internet is available or newspapers are read regularly, the breath was better. He'll see how Detroit stacks up next week at Meijer in Livonia.

It's simple, he says, to get your breath kissy-fresh.

"The No. 1 thing that everyone must do is drink more water. Saliva is key to keeping your breath fresh. A moist mouth is very enticing to someone who wants to be kissed," Katz says. "Drink eight glasses of water a day."

While mouthwashes, gums and mints may seem like a quick fix, they contain ingredients that can dry out the mouth. Alcohol and cigarettes, aside from inducing the obvious smells, also can dry out your kisser.

While good kisses are a thing to be cherished, bad kisses can end a relationship before it even begins. But, Demirjian cautions, if you like the person, you might give it a second chance.

"Don't discard him just yet. Give him instructions," she says. "If he's a good learner, he might come around. There's an opportunity to improve someone's kissing."

Christy L. Breithaupt is a Chicago freelance writer.

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Guys, be sure to shave. [See full image](#)

### Lip service

Thinking tonight is the night you get to lock lips? Here are some simple tips from Leya Belaya, an aesthetician at Salone Nadwa and Day Spa in Novi, to make sure you are smooch-worthy.

Keep your lips soft and smooth by following a simple skin care routine. Exfoliate your lips to remove the dry skin by applying a scrub and then using an old toothbrush to remove it. Next, apply a moisturizing masque, and finish with moisturizer or lip balm.

Don't lick your lips in the winter. This creates cracking and peeling.

A kiss involves more than just your mouth. When you are kissing someone, you are so close to their face you can see every imperfection -- including blackheads and stray hairs. Be sure your face is super clean and soft, and that you've kept up with any necessary facial waxing or plucking.

A special message for the guys: Please, please, please shave just before your date. A serious make-out session can leave a girl with painful and unsightly beard-burn. When shaving, choose one direction and stick with it or risk ingrown hairs.

Heavy kissing also can involve the touching of chins and noses, so if you've been actively puckering up, wash your face afterward to rid yourself of any oils that may have been exchanged. Apply a moisturizer after washing your face to combat any possible dry spots.

During a heavy make-out session, tongues may travel to areas other than the mouth. Ears are a common place for kissing, so make sure you clean out any wax that may be present. Guys also may want to consider an ear waxing.

Christy L. Breithaupt

### Have fresh breath?

Dr. Harold Katz is on a mission to rid the world of bad breath. To this end, he is traveling the country and measuring the breath of different cities to see which city has the most kissable breath. Katz will be using his handy Halimeter, a sophisticated instrument that measures levels of bad breath. Any reading above 70 means that someone has offensive breath. The city with the most kissable breath will be announced New Year's Eve on his Web site, [www.freshbreath.com](http://www.freshbreath.com). Katz will be in the area from 5-7 p.m. Feb. 1 at Meijer, 1300 Middlebelt Road, Livonia.

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