

Gum to stick it to bacteria that cause cavities

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CBC News

German scientists have developed friendly bacteria that will fight tooth decay — and body odour.

The chemical giant BASF and a Berlin company called Ludwigshafen and OrganoBalance use a bacterium called lactobacillus anti-caries to attack streptococcus mutans bacteria, which colonize the surface of the teeth and convert sugar into acids that attack the enamel.

"With lactobacillus anti-caries, we have found an antagonist which effectively binds to the caries germs and prevents them adhering to the surface of the teeth," Dr. Andreas Reindl, project leader at BASF Future Business, said in a release.

When the two bacteria meet, they clump together so they're too big to cause damage, and can be rinsed away. "The effectiveness has been demonstrated," Reindl said. "Negotiations are currently in progress with various manufacturers" and a product could be available next year, he added.

Citing a magazine called Chemistry and Industry, the BBC said the products could include a bacteria-fighting chewing gum.

BASF mentioned toothpaste and mouthwash in its release.

Beneficial lactobacilli could also help fight body odour, by moving in with the smelly bacteria. Lactobacillus cultures aimed at the bacteria in the feet and armpits "can improve the effectiveness of deodorants, foot sprays or lotions," BASF said.

It said there are huge and steadily growing markets for the dental-care products and deodorants, 13 billion euros (\$18.6 billion Cdn) and six billion euros (\$8.6 billion Cdn), respectively, each year.

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