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What is your diagnosis?

## Recurrent black stains of the tongue and the teeth

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### 1. Case report

This 60-year-old man presented with a 3-month history of painless black stains of the teeth and tongue, with no associated dysgeusia and no other symptoms (Fig. 1a and b). Dental polishing by his dentist was effective on the teeth, but the black stain systematically returned within 48 hours. This patient had no medical history, presented perfect oral hygiene, did not smoke and was not taking any medication. Standard bacteriological (direct examination and cultures) and mycological examinations of local samples were negative. His general practitioner had prescribed two different antifungal treatments (fungizone and miconazole) without success.



Fig. 1. a: dental stain; b: stain of the dorsal surface of the tongue.

### 2. Question

**What is your diagnosis?**

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### 3. Reponses

A second specific bacteriological examination revealed *Prevotella melaninogenica*, a Gram-negative anaerobic bacterium that can be found in the normal oral flora and can be incorporated in dental plaque, inducing black staining of the teeth, essentially in children. The black colour is due to the interaction between hydrogen sulphide produced by the bacterium and iron present in saliva or released by erythrocytes. Treatment is simple: repeated dental and interdental polishing and daily dental brushing with soap [1–5]. The lesions observed in this patient completely disappeared as a result of these measures, without the need for antiseptics or antibiotics.

### Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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