



Asthma and Oral Health Fact Sheet

FOR PROVIDERS

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

With 1 in 11 children, and 1 in 12 adults having asthma, it is likely that you will encounter asthma in your daily practice. Growing evidence suggests that asthma significantly increases the risk of dental caries.¹

What you need to know...

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways in the lungs. Common symptoms during asthma attacks are difficulty in breathing, wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and dyspnea. People who use asthma medication are at higher risk of having dental caries and other oral health problems.

Some asthma medication can reduce saliva and salivary enzymes in the mouth. Reduction in salivary flow causes dry mouth which increases the risk of developing dental caries. Other asthma medication can cause oral thrush (oral yeast infection).

Other oral health problems associated with asthma are oral ulcers, changes in taste, bad breath, dry and rough tongue, and burning feeling in the mouth. Research studies have shown that children and young adults with asthma have higher prevalence of dental erosion.

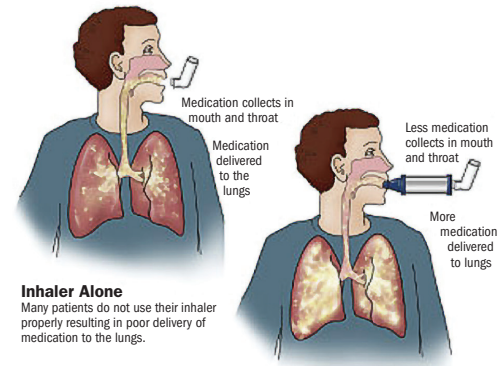
Ways You Can Help...

- Recommend your patients with asthma ask their medical provider for a written asthma action plan to help guide self-management efforts.
- An acute episode of asthma in the dental office may be caused by external factors such as inhaled allergens, as well as fear or anxiety. Some patients may do better with late morning or afternoon appointments.
- An asthma episode should be considered a medical emergency and must be treated promptly by inhalation of a bronchodilation agent. Recommend that your patient bring their inhaler with them during dental visits.
- Screen patients with asthma for oral candidiasis, particularly in patients who have additional risk factors such as smoking, denture use, or the use of inhalers and/or xerostomic medications. It is important to recommend that patients with asthma rinse their mouth after every inhaler use.

Oral health implications include:²

- Candidiasis
- Increased Caries Rate
- Dry mouth (Xerostomia)
- Dental Erosion
- Taste Disturbances
- Halitosis (Bad Breath)
- Gingivitis (gum inflammation)
- Periodontitis (Gum disease)

Consider the benefits of using a spacer (air chamber)



Inhaler Alone
Many patients do not use their inhaler properly resulting in poor delivery of medication to the lungs.

Inhaler + Air Chamber
Using an air chamber with an inhaler improved delivery of medication to the lungs and reduces side effects.

Footnotes:

1. http://www.ijmd.ro/articole/233_4%20PEDIATRIC%20DENTISTRY.pdf
2. http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/impacts_nation/asthmafactsheet.pdf

Resources:

- <http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/08/09/aje.kwr129.full>
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19441736
<http://www.jpma.org.pk/PdfDownload/7531.pdf>
<https://www.dentalcare.com/en-us/professional-education/ce-courses>

Check out <https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm> to learn more about asthma, its treatments and its measures of control.

For more information, contact Office of Oral Health
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