



Asthma and Oral Health Fact Sheet

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

In Connecticut, 1 in 11 children and 1 in 12 adults have asthma; this is higher than the national average.¹ People with asthma can experience many oral health problems.

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 cavities and other oral health problems.

Some asthma medication can reduce saliva and salivary enzymes in your mouth. Reduction in salivary flow causes dry mouth which increases the risk of developing dental cavities. Other asthma medication can cause oral thrush (oral yeast infection), so rinse mouth after every use.

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

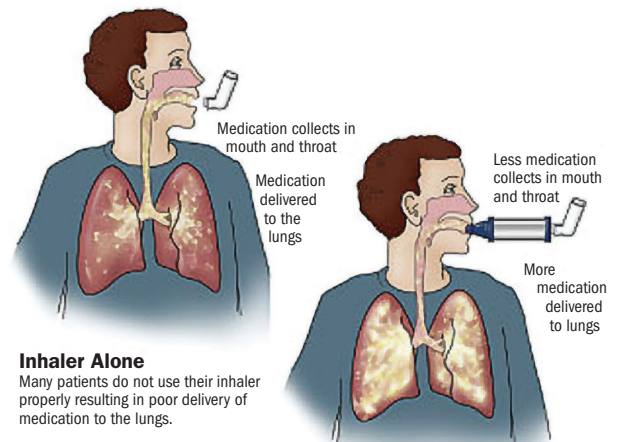
Ways You Can Help...

- Tell your dental provider if you or your child has asthma, and about any medications being taken.
- Have your inhaler available in case needed during dental visits.
- After using your inhaler, always rinse your mouth with water or a fluoride rinse.² If mouth is dry, drink plenty of water.
- Brush teeth gently with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste 2 times daily, and have teeth cleaned every 6 months.
- Report any changes to your oral health such as bleeding gums or sensitive teeth.
- Check out <http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm> to learn more about asthma, its treatments and its measures of control.

Visit your dental provider if you are experiencing any of the following:

- Bad breath that won't go away
- Red or swollen gums
- Tender or bleeding gums
- Painful chewing
- Loose tooth
- Sensitive tooth
- Receding gums or longer appearing teeth
- Oral yeast infection (thrush) which looks like a white coating or white (cottage cheese like) patches on the tongue that can be wiped off to reveal redness and/or mild bleeding

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.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hems/asthma/pdf/youth_asthma_factsheet_2015.pdf
2. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3213714/>

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