

The Oral Health Connection



Asthma & Oral Health

Did you know?

Did you know that **dental caries** (tooth decay) is the single **most common** chronic childhood disease – **5 times more common than asthma and 7 times more common than hay fever?** (1)

Asthma Prevalence

The prevalence of asthma among adults is higher in Connecticut than in the United States as a whole. Asthma prevalence also appears to be on the rise in Connecticut, where the prevalence among adults increased to 9.3% in 2006 from 7.8% in 2000. Approximately 248,000 (9.3%) adults and 86,000 (10.5%) children in Connecticut reported that they currently have asthma.

Asthma Medications

Several drugs that are used to treat asthma have effects on your mouth and on your throat. **Rescue inhalers** can cause xerostomia or dry mouth. Strong anti-inflammatory medications like **corticosteroids** can cause xerostomia or dry mouth as well, which can lead to an oral yeast infection called candidiasis or “thrush”. **Cromolyn** can cause nausea, cough, a bad taste in the mouth, increased saliva production, swollen saliva glands and a burning sensation in the mouth and throat. Moreover, these types of medications slow down the healing process.

Why use a Spacer?

If you are using an inhaler with steroids then you **should** use a spacer, which is a plastic tube that is attached to the inhaler. Spacers make it easier for the medication to reach the lungs and less medication deposits in the mouth and throat where it can lead to irritation and infection.

Spacer



Tips to keep your asthma in check while promoting oral health:

- Tell your dentist that you have asthma.
- Take your inhaler to your dentist appointments.
- Inform your dentist of all the asthma medications that you are taking and the dosage.
- After using an inhaler, rinse your mouth out with water or a fluoride mouthrinse.
- Have your teeth and gums cleaned and checked by your dentist at least every 6 months.
- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush to brush thoroughly and carefully for two minutes after every meal and before bedtime.
- Bleeding gums are not normal, if your gums bleed with brushing or flossing, go to see a dental professional for an evaluation.
- Prevent plaque buildup on teeth by using dental floss at least once a day.