

Asthma & Oral Health

A Fact Sheet



Many medications used to treat asthma have effects on the mouth, teeth and throat. Common ones include:

- Adrenergic agonists - can cause dry mouth
- Corticosteroids - can cause dry mouth, increased oral fungal infections and slow healing.
- 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.

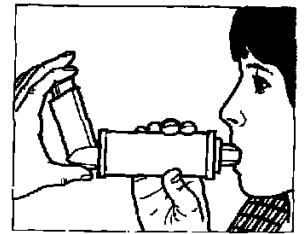
Common Oral Problems due to Asthma Medications:

- **Candidiasis**—or thrush, is an infection in the mouth caused by a yeast known as *Candida albicans*. It usually appears as white patches in the mouth with a red rash underneath that is usually painful. It can be treated with different medications. People who use steroids, especially inhalants are at risk of developing Candidiasis.
- **Dry Mouth**—is a condition of not having enough saliva to keep the mouth wet. It can cause problems in tasting chewing, swallowing, and speaking and can increase the chance of developing dental decay and other infections in the mouth.

Using a Spacer

To lessen the chances of oral problems sometimes a spacer is recommended.

- A spacer is placed at the end of the inhaler and allows for the medication to be delivered more slowly from the pressurized inhaler.
- Spacers make it easier for the medication to reach the lungs and also means there is less medication that gets deposited in the mouth and throat where it can lead to irritation and infection.
- Only use a spacer with a pressurized inhaler not with a dry-powder inhaler. Only spray one puff into it at a time.



At The Dental Office

- Take your inhaler to your dentist appointments.
- Give your dentist information about your latest attack, the factors that trigger your attacks and the severity of your condition.
- Tell your dentist what medications you are taking, some medications for asthma treatment have interactions with medications your dentist might prescribe.
- Increase frequency of dental visits with your dentist or hygienist to prevent gum disease and cavities.
- Visit your dental professional early in the day to reduce stress and ask for nitrous oxide to help reduce anxiety to keep from having an attack.

