What Your Dentist Wants You to Know About Asthma

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Your Oral Health With Asthma

There's a secret that your teeth are trying to tell you: asthma can be bad for your smile. The medications that you take may also be causing some complications. While we dental professionals don't want you to come off of your asthma medicine, we do want you to take a few extra steps to prevent dental complications that are associated with your condition.

First and foremost, always bring your inhaler with you to your dental appointment. Regardless of when the last time you had an attack was, it's a medical liability and puts you at risk of not having your inhaler with you. Dental care can increase a person's anxiety (ever heard of "white coat syndrome?"), and a panic attack could trigger an asthma flare-up. Set your inhaler out on the counter when you arrive so that it's easy for you or your dental provider to access it in an emergency.

Laughing gas is a great way to help reduce anxiety and prevent a flare-up. The nitrous gas is relaxing and the increased concentration of oxygen is great for your breathing. The only contraindication for using laughing gas is difficulty breathing out of the nose, such as during a sinus infection or severe allergies. Laughing gas can even be used during routine appointments like cleanings.

Inhalant Medications

Inhalant medications can reduce salivary secretions and increase tooth decay. Rinse thoroughly with water every time you use an inhalant medication to remove it from your mouth. Don't brush, because that will simply spread the medicine around further. Use a daily fluoride such as an over-the-counter rinse or prescription strength gel from your dentist. Fluoride remineralizes weakened enamel and even stops early decay. This will combat the effects of dry mouth and cavity susceptibility. Drink water frequently throughout the day to keep your mouth lubricated and reduce acid erosion.

Some medications can also cause staining of the teeth. Whitening toothpaste helps repel new stains from developing, but you can have your teeth cleaned or use a whitening treatment such as custom strays or whitening strips for existing stains.

Oral candida (yeast) infections of the mouth are also common, due to the change in oral flora from medications. Take probiotics or add sugar-free yogurt to your diet. Yogurt may also balance the pH of the mouth and minimize tooth decay, making it a great snack to have during the day.

Mouth breathing is a bad habit that some asthmatics develop, especially children. Breathing through the mouth dries the teeth and oral tissues, preventing saliva from washing bacteria off the teeth. Again, additional fluoride supplementation and regular consumption of water are important.

Every breath you take goes through your nose or your mouth. Your teeth are affected more than you think! See

your dentist regularly, especially if you are managing your condition with prescription medications. Cleanings and professional fluoride treatments can prevent enamel demineralization and keep your teeth healthy for a lifetime.