

Mouth Breathing and Jaw Development

Why not mouth breathe?

Mouth breathing is an all too common habit that can produce far-reaching health problems. Our mouths are designed for eating and drinking, not breathing.

How does mouth breathing affect jaw development?

Apart from the obvious drying of the mouth, which comes with increased risk of tooth decay & gum disease, the actual shape of our jaws will also be influenced in our formative years by this habit.

A mouth breather lowers the tongue position to allow the flow of air in to the expanding lungs. In this position, the tongue has little or no influence in shaping the upper jaw in the "U" shape that we know is necessary for a proper bite, and to prevent crowding.

Children whose mouth breathing is not addressed may develop long, narrow faces, narrow mouths, dental crowding, 'gummy' smiles and other unattractive facial features.

For some people with specific ENT issues, it is necessary for them to mouth breathe until those issues are resolved.

For others, it may have been necessary to mouth breathe during a period of congestion (eg a bad cold), and a habit formed.

In this instance, there is not a need to mouth breathe, it has simply become habitual.

The tongue's natural rest position is on the roof of the mouth. Try mouth breathing with your tongue up there!

Why is nasal breathing healthier?

Mouth breathing promotes over-breathing. Over-breathing (hyperventilation) is associated with many poor health outcomes including tiredness & fatigue, poor concentration, dizziness, asthma, headaches, rapid heartbeat, bed-wetting, disturbed sleep, sleep apnoeas, to name just a few.

The importance of nasal breathing cannot be overstated. Nasal breathing purifies the air we breathe, it moistens and warms the air before it travels to our lungs, and it regulates the volume of air that we breathe, preventing over-breathing.

Making the change from mouth breathing to nasal breathing can be challenging, however for children & adults alike, the rewards are plentiful.

Contact the clinic today for an assessment & advice on how you can make the change for better health.