

Oral Health Tips

Piercing: A Fad with Real Risks

Piercing body parts such as the lips and tongue can pose a real risk. Ask questions of your dentist and know the risks before you (or your child) venture out for any form of oral piercing. Tongue, cheek and lip piercing may not be as cool — or as safe — as you might think. Besides the pain of the procedure itself (typically done without anesthesia), there can be real serious consequences for your teeth, speech, salivary glands and overall health as a result of the piercing. For these reasons, oral piercing is not recommended by dental professionals.

Common Risks

- The mouth is a hotbed of bacteria. Infection can occur around the piercing site and quickly spread to other areas of the mouth and throat.
 - Excessive bleeding can result if the piercing needle damages a blood vessel
 - Possible nerve damage and permanent numbness can occur
 - Constant movement of tongue (unlike earlobe piercing) can interfere with healing
 - Piercing the tongue may cause it to swell, even to the point of blocking the airway
 - Possible blood borne disease transmission of hepatitis (hepatitis B, C, D and G) may result as identified by the National Institutes of Health
 - Increased likelihood of infections in other parts of the body because oral bacteria can enter the bloodstream. Infection can even travel to the heart with life-threatening consequences.
- Difficulty in chewing, swallowing and speaking
 - Slurred speech caused by excessive saliva production stimulated by jewelry
 - Oral hygiene problems around the jewelry
 - Choking hazard from loose mouth jewelry

Because of the numerous possible negative dental and health outcomes, the American Dental Association opposes oral piercing. When young people realize that these common complications could happen to them, the wise shift their fashion focus to less risky expressions of individuality.

Sources: American Dental Association: www.ada.org

Complications from Mouth Jewelry

- Chipped or cracked teeth from contact with ornaments such as studs, barbells and hoops in tongue, lips or cheek
- Gum injury and chronic irritation if jewelry is constantly rubbing on soft tissue

For more oral health information, please visit our Web site at www.decare.com

