

# TIPS AND TRICKS

## ORAL PIERCINGS

Oral piercings are any piercings of the tongue, lips or cheek. In recent years, oral piercings have become a form of self-expression. As with pierced ears, the metal jewelry used in oral piercings comes in different styles, including studs, barbells and rings. However, piercing your tongue, lips or cheek involves greater health risks than piercing your ears. Before having any part of your mouth pierced, you should seek advice from your dentist.



**Infection** — our mouths contain millions of bacteria, which can lead to infection after an oral piercing. Handling jewelry once it has been placed in the mouth also increases your chances of getting an infection



**Prolonged bleeding** — if a blood vessel is punctured by the needle during piercing, the result can be difficult-to-control bleeding and serious blood loss



**Pain and swelling** — pain and swelling are common symptoms of oral piercings. In extreme cases, a severely swollen tongue can actually close off the airway and restrict breathing



**Chipped or cracked teeth** — contact with oral jewelry can fracture teeth. Teeth that have restorations, such as crowns or caps, can also be damaged if the jewelry strikes them



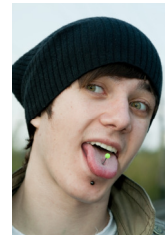
**Injury to the gums** — not only can metal jewelry injure soft gum tissue, it can cause the gums to recede. In addition to looking unattractive, recessed gums leave your tooth root more vulnerable to decay and periodontal disease



**Interference with normal oral function** — jewelry in the mouth can cause excessive saliva flow, impede your ability to pronounce words correctly, and cause problems with chewing and swallowing.



**Blood-borne diseases** — oral piercings have been identified by the National Institutes of Health as a possible factor in transmitting hepatitis B, C, D and G.



Be sure to see your dentist at the first sign of pain or problems, in addition to your regular checkups. Because of the risks involved even after the initial wound has healed, such as damage to the teeth or jewelry that becomes loose and gets ingested, your safest bet is to avoid oral piercings altogether.

