



# Oral Piercings and Hygiene

## Learn about the risks of oral piercing

### Are Oral Piercings Harmful?

Oral piercing is not a new fad. In fact, tongue and lip piercings are some of the most common forms of body art, practiced in almost every society throughout history. Depending on the culture, oral piercing of the tongue, lips, cheeks, or uvula (the teardrop tissue hanging at the back of the throat) can represent anything from marital status, coming of age, purity, financial status, courage, virility, or simply self-expression. Though these piercings may appear to be harmless, they may cause complications in the mouth or to one's overall health. According to the American Dental Association, some of the health risks associated with oral piercings include:

- Gingiva (gum) recession or overgrowth
- Swelling/inflammation
- Bleeding
- Chipped, fractured, or damaged tooth/teeth
- Infection/discharge from the pierced area
- Hyper salivation/drooling
- Airway obstruction/choking/swallowing jewelry
- Scarring of tissues or tooth abrasion
- Interference with speech
- Bad breath

Oral jewelry can interfere with dental diagnosis by blocking tooth structure for an x-ray or by limiting access for dental work. Dentists don't generally recommend oral piercings as the risks usually outweigh the benefits.

### Maintain a Healthy Oral Hygiene Routine

The dark, warm, and moist environment in the mouth makes a perfect condition to grow bacteria. Keeping your mouth clean by maintaining a good oral hygiene routine reduces the risk of infection after receiving an oral piercing. Make sure to follow all home care instructions and continue to brush and floss twice a day after a piercing:

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush with gentle, circular motion
- Use toothpaste with fluoride
- Rinse with an alcohol free mouth rinse



### When to Visit the Dentist

Oral piercings may cause some bleeding after the procedure, but the bleeding should subside. Make an appointment with your dentist if you observe a foul odor or taste, inflammation at the pierced site, prolonged bleeding, or a lesion. There may be infection present that can be life threatening if left untreated.



For more oral health information, please visit our website at [www.bcbsfepdental.com](http://www.bcbsfepdental.com).



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