

Piercings and Your Oral Health



Considering jewelry for your tongue, lip or cheek? First, weigh the risks of oral piercings.

- **Chipped teeth.** Your jewelry may fracture your teeth while you're sleeping, eating, talking or just playing with it in your mouth. Minor chips and breaks can be fixed with fillings or crowns, while deeper fractures or large broken pieces may require a root canal or tooth extraction.
- **Damaged gums.** Oral jewelry can rub against your gums, causing them to pull away from your teeth, exposing the roots. The damage can lead to sensitive teeth or may require procedures like root canals or extractions.
- **Infection.** When gums are punctured during piercing, oral bacteria can enter your bloodstream. Poor hygiene habits can also lead to infection.
- **Swelling.** A common occurrence after piercing, tongue swelling can block your airway.
- **Nerve damage.** Temporary or permanent nerve damage can make your tongue or mouth numb. It can also affect your sense of taste and mouth movement.



Previously or newly pierced? Minimize the risk of infection and damage.

- **Keep it clean.** Use an antiseptic mouthwash after every meal in addition to brushing and flossing twice daily. Brush your jewelry to remove any unseen plaque.
- **Go smaller.** New piercings often have a larger barbell to allow space for swelling. When the swelling subsides, switch to a smaller piece to reduce the risk of damage.
- **Play it safe.** After your piercing heals, remove your jewelry before playing sports, eating or sleeping. Use a plastic tongue ring retainer to plug the hole.