

Oral Piercings

Oral Piercings, including piercings of the tongue and lips, have become an increasingly popular trend. They also can pose several potentially serious risks to your health.

RISKS

INFECTION:

As with any opening in the skin or oral tissues, oral piercings are at an increased risk of infection. Due to the elevated level of bacteria in the oral cavity, these piercings have a high incidence of becoming infected.

One serious infection is endocarditis, an inflammation of the heart valves and/or tissues. This infection is caused when bacteria enter the bloodstream and travel to the heart and colonize.

Oral piercings present an opportunity for bacteria to enter the bloodstream, thus presenting great risk for individuals with cardiac abnormalities.

PROLONGED BLEEDING:

Damage to the tongue's blood vessels can cause serious blood loss. Blood poisoning and blood clots are also concerns.

SWELLING AND POSSIBLE NERVE DAMAGE:

Due to the constant motion of the tongue, swelling occurring from a tongue piercing can be excessive, causing difficulty with eating and speaking, and can last much longer than other areas of the body. In some instances the swelling can be severe enough to block the airway. The movement of the tongue can also impede the healing process. Allergic reactions may occur if the stud is not pure metal, causing swelling and discomfort.

BLOODBORNE DISEASE TRANSMISSION:

Oral piercing has also been identified by the National Institutes of Health as a possible factor in transmission of Hepatitis B, C, D and G.

INJURY TO GUMS:

The metal stud can injure the gums due to constant contact, thus causing the soft tissues to recede.

DAMAGE TO THE TEETH:

Teeth can become cracked or chipped from the metal stud or barbell moving around inside the mouth. Likewise, teeth that have restorations can be damaged if jewelry strikes them.

INTERFERENCE WITH ORAL HEALTH EVALUATION:

Jewelry in the mouth can block the transmission of X-rays. Clear radiographs are essential to a complete oral health evaluation. Jewelry can prevent an x-ray from revealing abnormalities like cysts, abscesses or tumors.