Oral Piercing

Risk factors and follow-up care for oral piercing

Oral piercing may be trendy, but there are risks.
Be safe and follow proper oral care to avoid complications.

Be a smart consumer
- Talk to a dentist, dental hygienist, doctor or nurse before making your decision
- Have the piercing studio provide verbal and written instructions on after-care
- Ask about the studio’s sterilization methods
- Make sure the piercer practices proper hand washing and wears single-use gloves

Risks with oral piercing
- **Teeth problem** - oral jewellery may damage teeth or fillings
- **Nerve damage** - to the facial or tongue muscles
- **Infection** - too much or long-lasting swelling and pain. Pus around the site
- **Potential for disease transmission** - hepatitis, HIV, herpes, if proper sterilization methods are not used, or if you have oral sex during the healing process
- **Allergic reactions** - to nickel or other metals
- **Other** - accidental swallowing, limited tongue movement (speech problems) and loss of taste or sensation

Caring for your piercing
- Always wash your hands before you touch or clean the piercing
- Don’t remove the jewellery if it seems to be infected. Consult your physician.

The first weeks:
- Carefully brush your teeth with a new, soft-bristled toothbrush
- Sucking on ice chips may help reduce swelling
- Rinse with warm salt water, or an alcohol-free, antibacterial mouthwash
- Avoid smoking, spicy and hard food and alcoholic beverages
- Don’t remove or change the original jewellery until the piercing is fully healed (up to eight weeks)

Ongoing care:
- Continue to practice good oral hygiene
- Remove oral jewellery and clean it well with a mild antibacterial soap
- Remove oral jewellery during sports to prevent mouth injury and possible choking
- A night guard may be needed to protect teeth
- Change metal stud to plastic after the healing
- Avoid playing with stud

Need more information? Call Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744

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Factsheet adapted from the York Region Health Unit’s Oral Piercing Brochure