



### **Tongue piercing is in! But it comes with serious risks ...**

Although tongue piercing is considered a new form of body art, serious oral risks are associated with this modern-day fad.

#### **PAINFUL SIDE EFFECTS**

Countless risks go along with piercing your tongue. Body piercers have no license and often provide little, if any, preoperative or post-op care instructions. The National Institutes of Health also notes that piercing can transmit hepatitis B, C, D and G, as well as HIV, not to mention that the mouth is full of bacteria!

#### **WRECKING BALL FOR YOUR MOUTH**

In addition to risks of infection, a tongue piercing can do serious damage to your teeth. Most tongue jewelry is in the shape of a barbell, with a post running through the tongue and held in place with two balls at either end. Because the tongue is always in motion, the surrounding teeth are in constant jeopardy. The balls, usually metal, strike the teeth resulting in tooth fractures and cracks. This can occur when playing with the piercing, chewing, eating, talking or even sleeping. If the fracture from your piercing is deep enough, a root canal may be necessary. The repetitive motion of the balls along the teeth can also cause gum recession and injury.

#### **PROTECT YOUR TEETH**

Using the smallest possible jewelry will allow for the least risk of injury to your teeth. Remove the piercing whenever possible, especially when injury to the mouth could occur (during sporting activities, for example). And be sure to visit your dentist regularly to make sure your piercing isn't damaging your smile.

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