



**Protecting your mouth -**  
all you need to know about  
mouth and tongue piercing...

# Protecting your mouth

## Thinking about getting a tongue or mouth piercing?

Before you go ahead you should consider the effects on your mouth, which can include complications such as infection and damage to teeth and gums. It is recommended that you check with a doctor if you are pregnant, have allergies, heart disease, diabetes or skin disorders. Don't pierce yourself or have a friend do it – get it done professionally. Choose your piercing shop and your jewellery carefully.

### Before your piercing, check:

- The shop is clean. If the shop isn't clean or you are uncomfortable in any way, find somewhere else to have your piercing
- The piercer washes his or her hands with antiseptic soap and wears fresh disposable gloves (like those worn at a doctor's surgery)
- The piercer uses disposable or sterilised instruments
- The piercer does not use a piercing gun (they're not sterile)
- The needle is new and being used for the first time (watch them open the packet and remove it)
- The needle is disposed of in a special sealed sharps container after the piercing
- There are procedures for the proper handling and disposal of waste such as needles or gauze with blood on them
- Only non-toxic metals will be used for tongue or mouth piercing, such as surgical steel, solid 14 carat or 18 carat gold, niobium, titanium and platinum (ask the piercer what they use).

### Looking after the piercing...

Healing can take from a few weeks to more than a year. You will probably find you have a lot more saliva in your mouth for a while.

- Get instructions from the piercing shop on how to make sure your new piercing heals correctly, and what to do if there is a problem
- Don't pick or tug at the pierced area
- Try to keep your tongue away from your teeth and gums
- Make sure you use an antibacterial mouthwash often (about 4 times per day) and especially after eating
- Avoid smoking and don't drink alcohol or eat spicy foods until the piercing site is fully healed.

### What could go wrong and getting help...

If you have severe redness, bleeding, pain or pus around your piercing you should visit a doctor immediately. You will probably have some swelling and soreness for a couple of days. If it lasts any longer, visit a doctor.

If your inner lip has been pierced, bolts are more likely to rub against the gums and can permanently damage gums and teeth. Similar effects can occur with tongue piercing. If you notice any damage to your gums or teeth, or you experience any pain, go to a dental clinic.

**If you are a secondary school student, or school leaver under 18 and have a Health Care Card or a Pensioner Concession Card (or parents with one) you can access free dental care at your local Community Dental Clinic.**

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[www.dhsv.org.au](http://www.dhsv.org.au)

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