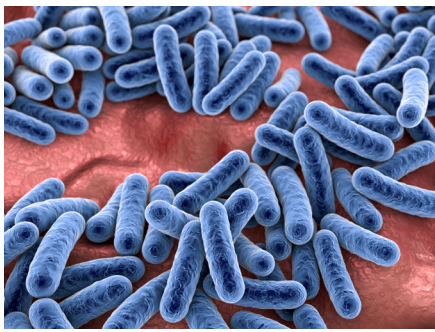


# To Pierce or Not to Pierce

Oral piercing may be the look you're after, but before you pierce, think! Understand that there are many health risks that come with oral piercing. Know that piercings require constant attention and upkeep to remain safe from infection and other possible health problems. It's up to you but understand the risks before you pierce.

## Risks

Oral piercing can lead to health problems, including infection, bleeding, swelling, damaged teeth, scarring, allergic reactions, and even life-threatening complications. Oral piercings can also interfere with chewing, speaking, and swallowing.



## Infection, the Greatest Concern

Everyone's mouth is filled with millions of tiny bacteria. During piercing, these bacteria can cause infection at the piercing site. Touching the piercing or the jewelry in the mouth can also cause infection. Bacteria on your hands can infect the piercing site. Normal eating can also be a problem. Food particles can collect around the piercing site causing infection. Infections that begin in the mouth don't necessarily stay in the mouth. Infections can spread causing health complications throughout the body.

## Other Concerns

- Prolonged bleeding can cause serious blood loss
- Swelling can potentially block your airway
- Nerve damage can create numbness and interfere with your sense of taste
- Drooling and difficulty speaking can affect your ability to pronounce words clearly
- Damage to teeth and gums can result in expensive dental treatment such as fillings, crowns, and root canal

## Before Piercing

Before you pierce, choose a reputable shop. Make sure it is clean, well run and the piercer is licensed against Hepatitis B. Make sure the piercer uses a sterile needle and jewelry made of surgical steel, gold, or platinum. The piercer should also provide written and verbal instructions on how to care for your piercing.

## Oral Hygiene

Whether you pierce or not, always make sure to practice good oral hygiene! This includes brushing twice a day, flossing at least once a day and making sure to see your dentist regularly, every six months. The American Dental Association advises against oral piercings.

To pierce or not to pierce. The decision is yours but know the risk before you decide.

