How Oral Piercings can lead to Tooth Loss; Trendy, but Dangerous

By Juan M. Teodoro, D.M.D



Constant trauma damages the bone and gum tissue



Piercings of the lip, tongue or cheek are very popular, but the problems associated with piercings are detrimental to oral health. Individuals with oral piercings are at risk for tooth decay, tooth chipping, gum recession, bone loss around teeth and ultimately tooth loss.

We have seen young patients in our practice over the past several years, which have had dramatic gum defects, bone loss and tooth mobility associated with oral piercings. These problems are localized to areas in close proximity to the jewelry ring. These patients have no other signs of gum disease in other areas, and they would not normally be at risk of periodontal disease. Tongue piercings most commonly affect the lower front teeth. The tongue-ring will cause trauma to the gum tissue while eating and speaking. In addition, many individuals with tongue rings develop a tongue thrusting habit that causes hitting of the ring against the lower teeth and gum tissues. This trauma allows the bacteria within the oral cavity to infiltrate the tissues and create an acute inflammatory condition. Ultimately, infection ensues and will cause irreversible bone loss which could result in eventual tooth loss.

Overall the general public has not been well informed of these risks. Most patients who present to our practice with piercing related periodontal disease, are completely unaware of the risks associated with this fashion trend. Fortunately, most patients when faced with the possibility of losing their front teeth at a young age, decide to discontinue the use of oral jewelry.

The trauma induced by the ring strips the gum tissue away from the teeth while destroying the bone supporting the tooth underneath. Patients that are diagnosed early still have treatment options to help them save their teeth. Laser therapy or bone and tissue grafting would help restore some of the lost gum and bone. Others who are diagnosed later may not be as fortunate and will lose their teeth.

Bonita Periodontics and Implants

Contact Dr. Teodoro by calling 239-333-4343 to schedule a CONSULTATION.

If you wear oral piercing jewelry, you should seek a periodontal screening examination to assess whether you have experienced any of these problems. If a family member or friend wears an oral piercing, please share this information and you may save someone you care about from losing their front teeth.



Dr. Teodoro is a Board Certified Periodontist. He holds both Diplomate status in the American Academy of Periodontology and the International Congress of Oral Implantologists. Dr. Teodoro served as Major in the United States Air Force practicing periodontics. Throughout his Air Force career he served as Chief of Periodontics, Director of the Implant Board & Clinical Instructor. He is currently a clinical assistant professor at the Naples dental residency program for the University of Florida. Dr. Teodoro was the first periodontist in both Lee and Collier County to bring the latest on Laser Periodontal Surgery with the use of the PerioLase.