

# Tongue and lip piercings may damage teeth and gums

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Oral piercings should be removed to save teeth and gums, urged dental professionals displaying an e-poster at EuroPerio10, the world's leading congress in periodontology and implant dentistry organized by the

European Federation of Periodontology (EFP).

"Our study found that many people with oral piercings had deep pockets and gaps around their [teeth](#), and receding and bleeding gums," said study author Professor Clemens Walter of University Medicine Greifswald, Germany. "These are all signs of periodontitis, also called [gum disease](#), which can lead to tooth loss. People with tongue and lip piercings should remove them to protect their teeth and gums from further damage."

It is estimated that approximately 5% of [young adults](#) have oral piercings with the tongue being the most common site. Women are around four times more likely to have an oral piercing than men.

This [systematic review](#) collected the best available evidence on piercings and [oral health](#). The analysis included eight studies with 408 participants who had a total of 236 lip piercings and 236 tongue piercings. Every fifth patient had piercings in more than one oral site. Wearing duration varied from one month to 19 years and most jewelry was metal.

The studies compared teeth and gums next to the piercing with teeth and gums elsewhere in the mouth. Regarding tongue piercings, three in five studies found deeper pockets around teeth next to the piercing while three in four studies observed wider gaps. All four studies that examined patients for receding gums found this problem in those with tongue piercings while two in three studies found bleeding gums. As for lip piercings, the main finding was receding gums, which was observed in three out of four studies.

Professor Walter said: "The findings suggest that oral piercings, especially in the tongue, negatively affect the adjacent teeth and gums. In those with tongue piercings, damage was particularly notable around the bottom two front teeth, called the mandibular incisors, which are important for biting and chewing food. The likelihood of tooth and gum

damage appeared to increase with the duration of wearing a lip or [tongue piercing](#)."

He concluded: "Dentists should inform their patients about the risk of periodontal complications when wearing oral piercings, and people with these piercings should be strongly encouraged to remove them."

**More information:** Influence of oral piercings on periodontal health—a systematic review," presented 15 June at [EuroPerio10](#)

Provided by European Federation of Periodontology (EFP)

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