



Tongue piercing may be bad for teeth, smile

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By Robert Preidt, HealthDay



Gannett file photo

Tongue piercings are not removed in the way that earrings can be because "the tongue is so vascular that leaving the stud out can result in healing of the opening in the tongue," says professor Sawsan Tabbaa.

Tongue piercing can lead to a damaging habit that causes a gap to appear between the upper front teeth, which could cost thousands of dollars to fix, a case study suggests.

The patient was a 26-year-old woman who came to the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine's orthodontic clinic because a large space had developed between her upper front teeth. She also had a tongue piercing that held a barbell-shaped stud.

The woman did not have a gap in her teeth before she had her tongue pierced seven years before. But she developed a habit in which she repeatedly pushed the stud against her upper front teeth, which created the gap, the study authors noted.

"The barbell is never removed because the tongue is

so vascular that leaving the stud out can result in healing of the opening in the tongue, so it makes perfect sense that constant pushing of the stud against the teeth — every day with no break — will move them or drive them apart," study author Sawsan Tabbaa, an assistant professor of orthodontics, said in a university news release.

The woman was treated with braces to close the gap between her front teeth, according to the case study published in the July issue of the *Journal of Clinical Orthodontics*.

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Tabbaa noted that tongue piercing can also cause chipped and fractured teeth, gum trauma, infection, hemorrhage and even brain abscess.

"The best way to protect your health, your teeth and your money is to avoid tongue piercing," Tabbaa said.

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