

Want Higher Orthodontist Bills? Let Your Child Get a Tongue Piercing

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Wanna pierce your tongue? Start saving for braces. Credit: Getty

The joys of parenting: You bring your perfect little bundle of joy home from the hospital ... and she cries all night. In preschool, she refuses to wear anything but a neon pink tutu. A few short years later she's got her room wallpapered with Justin Bieber posters.

Relax, you tell yourself. It's just a phase.

And then, come the piercings. First the ears. Next? The belly button. And then, oh, dear, the tongue. And that, a new study shows, is more than just a passing stage. That can have a serious impact on a life.

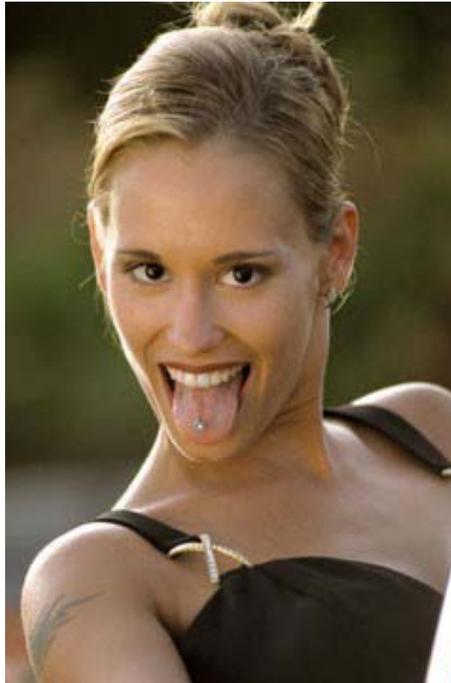
Yours.

That little stud in your daughter's tongue might well cost you thousands of smackeros in orthodontist bills.

As she plays with the little ball and pushes it against her upper front teeth, she is forcing a gap between them, according to a report in the *Journal of Clinical Orthodontics*.

"It is a basic tenet of orthodontics that force, over time, moves teeth," the study's primary investigator, Sawsan Tabbaa, assistant professor of orthodontics at the University of Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, explains in a statement.

An earlier study found that a very high percentage of high school students with tongue piercings developed the habit of pushing the stud up against their front teeth. Tabbaa's current study shows the



habit can result in a gap.

In the study, he considered a 26-year-old woman who had come to the university's orthodontic clinic complaining that a large space had developed between her upper front teeth. She also had a barbell-shaped stud in her tongue.

She'd had the piercing for seven years, and had spent all of those years pushing the little ball against her teeth. When a space between them eventually opened up, she pushed the stud into it. Before the piercing, there had been no gap.

And, unlike pierced ears, where jewelry can be taken in and out, the tongue heals very quickly so the piercing must be left in all the time — meaning the pressure against the teeth is nearly constant in people who play with their studs.

The woman got braces to push her teeth

back together.

In addition to moving teeth around, tongue piercings can cause bleeding, infection, chipped teeth, gum problems and even brain abscess, Tabbaa says.

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