



On the Tip of the Tongue

Oral piercings are a trend with the young population. However, you can make your students aware of the following potential complications and risks of oral piercing:

- Swelling
- Airway obstruction from swelling
- Pain
- Fractured teeth
- Gum recession
- Damage to nerves
- Infection
- Drooling and excess salivation
- Altered taste
- Prolonged bleeding after the procedure
- Aspiration or ingestion of jewelry
- Difficulty with chewing, swallowing, and speech
- Scar tissue formation
- Allergic reaction or sensitivity to metal in jewelry

If infection occurs, systemic antibiotics and chlorhexidine rinses will help to resolve the problem. Mouth jewelry that continually hits teeth can result in chipped and fractured teeth.

Some people may experience an allergic reaction to the studs, especially if the jewelry is of

questionable quality and contains metals such as nickel.

The best advice you can give is to discourage students from seeking a piercing. Despite your best attempts to dissuade your students from getting an oral piercing, you can provide some post-piercing home care instructions, should they choose to forge ahead.

- Rinse the mouth 3–4 times daily with an antibacterial mouthwash, preferably alcohol free to prevent drying of oral tissues. Warm salt water rinses will help as well.
- Avoid spicy and/or hard to chew foods for the first week.
- Don't smoke or use other tobacco products.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Suck on ice for the initial three to five days to combat swelling.
- Have the dentist examine your mouth if a problem is suspected. Early warning signs of a problem include persistent, low-grade fever, yellow or green discharge from the piercing site, a pimple-like bubble on the piercing site, or continued bleeding.