

July & August 2009 Newsletter

Oral Piercings: How It Affects Your Dental and Overall Health

Oral piercings seem to be popular in our world today. Many people view oral piercings as a way to express themselves but don't think about the consequences of having them. When we talk about an oral piercing, we are talking about tongue piercings, lip piercings, and labret piercings. All of these piercings can affect oral hygiene and total body health, whether you realize it or not.

Your oral hygiene can be compromised in several ways by having these piercings. First off, these sites are prone to harboring bacteria. The piercing sites are great grounds for food to collect and for bacteria to breed. This can aid in developing an infection or decay in your teeth. Secondly, these piercings can injure the gums, can lead to cracked or broken teeth, or even lead to sensitive teeth. The damage caused by these can lead to the possibilities of needing dental treatment such as crowns, fillings, or even root canals.

Not only can these piercings result in poor oral hygiene, but can compromise overall health. Tongue piercings can swell immediately after having them pierced and damage blood vessels. When the tongue is pierced it can swell large enough to block the airway and cause serious blood loss from the damage of the blood vessels being pierced. These piercings have also been identified as a possible factor in transmitting hepatitis B, C, D, and G. Along with these health risks, one major issue can be with the heart. Oral piercings can increase the risk of endocarditis, which is the inflammation of the heart tissue. The bacteria can enter through the piercing sites and into the bloodstream, where they multiply and travel to the heart.

If you already have piercings, you should contact your physician immediately to check for any signs of infection. Also make sure to keep the piercing site clean by using mouth rinse after every meal. Minimize clicking the jewelry against your teeth, which can cause teeth to break. See your dentist regularly to check for signs of teeth breaking and make sure to floss and brush twice daily. Most importantly, consider removing all oral piercings before it's too late.

If you are considering them, please visit with your hygienist or dentist at your next dental appointment on how they can affect your oral hygiene and health.

Why We Take Dental X-rays

We use dental radiographs, commonly known as x-rays, to diagnose many oral diseases and infections. It is impossible for doctors or hygienists to see between the teeth and below the gumline without these photographs. If we did not take these radiographs, the dentist would be limited to examining only the diseases that are visible in the mouth. These radiographs allow us to detect problems earlier so that pain and costly treatment can be prevented.

How often we take these radiographs are based on the individual patient's need. There is no set interval for taking radiographs; most adults without a recent history of decay will usually have these taken once a year or less often. Other patients with a high risk of tooth decay, periodontal disease, or other infections may need radiographs taken more often. Some children with a history of decay may need these at each appointment because decay can spread much faster due to thinner enamel on primary teeth.

With new technology, we are able to offer digital radiography at our office, which delivers much less radiation than film radiography. We avoid dental radiographs on pregnant patients, unless there is an emergency that our doctor needs to identify the problem. Only in an emergency case would we take x-rays but we would protect both the mother and baby with a lead apron or collar.

Our At Home Whitening Program

You've probably heard about our at home *Lifetime Whitening* program from our assistants, hygienists or dentists. Our program is easy to follow and is only \$99! We want you to know that there is a cost effective option to get that white smile you have always dreamed about!

The Lifetime Whitening program is as easy as 1, 2, 3. First, you enroll in the program for \$99. This fee includes custom bleaching trays and a tube of Opalescence bleach at every six month cleaning! Second, you come to each six month cleaning appointments. As long as you come for your six month hygiene appointments, you will receive your free tube of bleach! Third, you whiten your teeth at home, on your own time! It's this easy!

Your preventative appointments are vital to keeping your teeth and body healthy. Giving you a tube of bleach at your hygiene appointment is one way we can reward you for your efforts at home and for coming every six months.

Below is a list of tips to help you obtain that white smile with the *Lifetime Whitening* program.

- Avoid drinks/food that are dark in color during at home whitening, such as cola, spaghetti sauce, red wine, coffee, etc. and for 48 hours after your last session of whitening.
- We recommend brushing with a sensitivity toothpaste one week prior to whitening and each day you whiten to help cut sensitivity.
- Ultra sonic toothbrushes are a great way to keep stain off your teeth from colored foods and drinks you take in each day.