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Tongue studs can cause dental divide

Posted By [Sara Saldi-UB](#) On August 2, 2010 @ 2:05 pm In [Health & Medicine](#) | [No Comments](#)

U. BUFFALO (US)—Tiny barbell-shaped tongue studs can create a small space in the teeth that can cost thousands of dollars of orthodontic bills to correct, according to a new study.

"It is a basic tenet of orthodontics that force, over time, moves teeth," explains Sawsan Tabbaa, assistant professor of orthodontics at the [University at Buffalo](#) ^[1] School of Dental Medicine.

A previous survey of Buffalo high school students reveals that the presence of a barbell implant/stud caused a damaging habit whereby subjects pushed the metal stud up against and between their upper front teeth, a habit commonly referred to among the students as "playing."

"And it happened in very high percent of the cases," Tabbaa says.

That repeated "playing" with the stud may result in a gap as is demonstrated in Tabbaa's current case study. Details appear in the July issue of the [Journal of Clinical Orthodontics](#). ^[2]

The study involved a 26- year-old female patient who complained that a large space had developed between her upper central incisors or upper front teeth. The patient also had a tongue piercing that held a barbell-shaped tongue stud.

The tongue was pierced seven years earlier and every day for seven years she had pushed the stud between her upper front teeth, creating the space between them and, subsequently, habitually placing it in the space.

The patient did not have a space between her upper front teeth prior to the tongue piercing.

"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, says Tabbaa, "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."

The patient provided the research team with photos demonstrating she had no diastema, or space, prior to having her tongue pierced.

For the purposes of treating this patient's space, it was assumed that positioning of the tongue stud between the maxillary central incisors caused the midline space.

Her treatment involved a fixed braces appliance to push the front teeth back together.

Tongue piercing can result in serious injury not just to teeth but has also been associated with hemorrhage, infection, trauma to the gums and, in the worst cases, brain abscesses, Tabbaa says.

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

More news from the University at Buffalo: www.buffalo.edu/news/ ^[3]

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- [1] University at Buffalo: <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/11585>
- [2] Journal of Clinical Orthodontics.: <http://www.jco-online.com/>
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