

Tongue Piercing May Cause Gapped Teeth



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After seven years of "playing" with a tongue piercing by forcing it against her upper front teeth, one 26-year-old woman needed braces, costing thousands of dollars, to correct the fraction-of-an inch gap she had forced between those teeth.

To document what is considered to be a common phenomenon among those with metal studs inserted into their tongues, dental researchers at the University of Buffalo collected photos from the patient. These showed she had no diastema, or space, between her upper central incisors prior to receiving the [tongue piercing](#).

Based upon the position of the space, the researchers concluded that the young woman created the midline gap by pushing the barbell-shaped stud against her upper front teeth every day for seven years.

"It is a basic tenet of orthodontics that force, over time, moves teeth," said Swansan Tabbaa, an assistant professor of orthodontics at the university's School of Dental Medicine and lead researcher on the case study.

A previous survey by the university's dental school found that [tongue piercings](#) caused [high school students](#) in Buffalo to pick up this habit, which the students called "playing."

"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," Tabbaa said. "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 case study is published in the July issue of Journal of Clinical Orthodontics.

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