

## Tongue Piercing

### *Speaking of tongues....*

The tongue is an extraordinary muscle that has many functions. The mouth is the first place from which a baby explores life. With thousands of taste buds on the upper surface, the tongue is a muscle of pure sensation and pleasure.

The tongue serves us in many ways. Consider its role in the following activities:

- Swallowing
- Speaking
- Eating
- Tasting
- Kissing
- Spitting
- Temperature sensitivity
- Putting a thermometer under it
- Licking your lips
- Masticating the bolus

As well as being a taste/temperature detective, the tongue has one of the larger nerve supplies compared with other organs in the human body and it is full of blood vessels that supply it with nutrients.

People pierce their tongues for various reasons; because it's trendy, peer group pressure, friends are doing it, rebelling against parents, increasing sexual pleasure, something to toy with etc. But here are the reality checks on the complications that can be triggered by piercing the muscle that is a brilliant engineering feat of nature:

- Nerve damage
- Rupturing of blood vessels
- Gum disease - the ring and hole in the tongue becomes a pit of bacteria - the spread of this bacteria extends not only throughout the mouth but also down the throat
- Halitosis (bad yucky breath)
- Fractured teeth
- Soft tissue damage such as the roof and floor of the mouth and cheeks.
- Ripping of tongue if the ring or stud gets caught on something or locks 'horns' with your partner's ring!
- Reported case of a brain abscess through infected tongue.

As we age, the numbers of taste buds on our tongue decreases. Why deliberately speed up this process by inflicting injury on our tongues?