

Dental Grills

Also known as grillz, fronts, plates, caps, shines or slugs, these decorative dental covers – a type of bling jewelry – were made popular by hip hop artists in the early 1980s. They are usually made of gold, silver or platinum, sometimes with precious stones encrusted into the metal that snaps over one or more teeth.

Some youngsters resort to wearing aluminum foil on their teeth to emulate their idols.

The Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association does not condone or recommend any type of dental grill.

IMPACT ON ORAL HEALTH

If the grills fit properly and are worn only intermittently, wearers are at low risk for dental problems. Problems from long-term wear include trapped bacteria under the grill, causing gum disease, cavities or even bone loss. Other dental concerns include:

- Decay around poorly fitting margins, especially for permanently bonded grills
- Difficulty cleaning non-customized grills
- Metal allergies, especially with inexpensive base metals, causing gum irritation
- Chipped teeth

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PROBLEMS

- Gingival (gum) inflammation with any combination of redness, swelling or bleeding
- Irritation/cuts on inside of lips
- Odour
- Shifting teeth
- Tooth decay – appearance of white or dark spots
- Enamel wear on opposing teeth
- Discomfort from poor fitting grills
- Altered or impaired speech – lisping

TREATMENT AND CARE

Grills can be purchased anywhere from malls, jewelry and novelty stores to the Internet and do not include oral care instructions. Similar to oral piercing, dental

hygienists understand the fad and the health risks. They educate their clients and parents on the oral health implications and teach proper care of their teeth and their grills as a way to minimize any damage, which includes:

- Check jewelry tightness daily.
- Clean regularly with water; avoid toxic jewelry cleaners.
- Brush the inside surfaces of grills with a soft toothbrush, rinse with hydrogen peroxide and rinse again with water.
- Brush natural teeth twice daily with fluoridated toothpaste and a soft-bristle brush.
- Floss natural teeth daily.
- Schedule regular professional cleanings and dental examinations.

For clients with fixed grills, dental hygienists can recommend a variety of plaque-control aids to clean around permanently cemented grills. Depending on the space available around the margin, an interproximal brush, sulcus brush, rubber tip, floss threader or wooden wedge could be used.

Without a custom fit, plaque acids can cause decay around poorly fitting margins, especially in grills that have been permanently bonded.

As professional health-care providers, dental hygienists are primarily concerned with promoting good oral health. Dental hygiene is among the largest of the regulated healthcare professions in the province. In Ontario all dental hygienists are registered with the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, which regulates the profession to ensure the public receives safe and ongoing comprehensive oral care.

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