

TONGUE- TIE IN THE BREASTFED INFANT

What is a tongue-tie?

Most of us have a membrane, called the lingual frenulum, that runs between the underside of the tongue and the floor of the mouth. If this membrane restricts tongue movement it is called a tongue-tie. If the frenulum is attached close to the tip of the tongue it's called *anterior*. If it is only at the base of the tongue it is called a *posterior* tongue-tie.

Tongue-tie symptoms in a breastfed baby?

- Long feeds, perhaps slow weight gain and/or dwindling supply due to poor milk removal
- Baby falls asleep after the first letdown, or right away
- Baby fusses at breast indicating he's finding breastfeeding difficult or uncomfortable
- Sore nipples

How is a tongue-tie assessed?

Tongue-tie is diagnosed based on function and not appearance. First correct the position of the baby at breast and see if a good latch resolves all your concerns. If problems persist your baby's doctor may place a referral to an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat specialist), skilled in evaluating and, if necessary, releasing a tongue-tie. Some pediatricians have this training.

How is the tongue-tie released (frenotomy)?

A quick snip or two with special scissors may be all that is needed. Your baby likely will object loudly to being held still, and to having fingers in her mouth, but may not feel the actual snip. If bleeding results, the physician will control this with pressure and perhaps a topical medication. Some pediatric dentists take a different approach using a laser or cauterity device.

Does a frenotomy always resolve all problems?

Most mothers report improvement immediately but others find it takes a week or so for baby to develop optimal tongue movements. A few mothers find no improvement.

Is there any special care following a release?

There may be no special steps necessary after releasing a thin tongue-tie. However, some are quite thick and there may be concern about reattachment. In this case the physician will suggest some daily tongue exercises to prevent this. Here are some ideas:

Gentle post-frenotomy care and mouth work by Melissa Cole:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JMcBF85ehs>

LA lactation lady baby suck training

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZshdrbQf-g>

Tummy time can be helpful

<https://www.tummytimemethod.com/tummytimetrade-method.html>

What about a lip tie?

These are rare and result in a difficult, painful latch, and abrasion on the areola.

Resources:

- Dr. Bobby Ghaheri - Drghaheri.com/downloads/
- Dr. Lawrence Kotlow – kiddsteeth.com/articles.php
- <http://www.cwgenna.com/quickhelp.html>
- Kellymom.com/health/baby-health/bfhelp-tonguetie/