



What is Tongue-Tie?

- **Ankyloglossia** is the medical term for *tongue-tie*. This refers to the piece of tissue under the middle of the tongue (lingual frenulum) being too tight.
- While everyone has this piece of tissue, sometimes it is either too short or too thick.
- Tongue-ties can make it hard for a baby to move the tongue in order to feed, resulting in poor weight gain. They can also cause health problems later.
- In the past, medical experts thought that 4 - 10% of people had tongue-tie. As more studies are being done, that number is likely much higher.
- A tongue-tie that goes all the way to the tip (anterior tongue-tie) is easy to see. Often the tongue is pulled into the shape of a heart when extended. People with this kind of tie usually can't stick their tongue out past their lower gum line.
- Tongue-ties can also be hidden under the skin (posterior tongue-tie), making them hard to see. People with this kind of tie can often stick their tongue out okay, but since the tongue is attached under the skin, the back of the tongue can't move well for things like swallowing.
- Not all people with tongue-tie will have problems. Some people can figure out other ways to use their tongue to eat and talk okay.
- It is really important to check the tongues of breastfed babies. Tongue-tie can affect a baby's ability to latch to the breast and how well a baby can drink. Even if the latch looks okay, a baby may not be getting enough milk.

Tongue-Tie can Cause...

Breastfeeding Problems:

- nipple soreness and damage
- poor suck, baby can't get enough milk
- poor seal on nipple, leaking milk
- trouble staying latched
- long feedings
- poor weight gain/failure-to-thrive

Other:

- dental problems
- speech problems
- indigestion
- snoring/sleep apnea
- migraines/headaches/TMJ Disorder
- personal (can't lick ice-cream, kissing)

How is Tongue-Tie Treated?

Tongue-tie is treated by cutting the tight tissue under the tongue. A healthcare provider does this using scissors or laser. It is safe and allows baby to move the tongue normally. After the treatment, your baby will be learning to use the tongue in a new way. Some babies need no help at all, and some babies can be helped by other professionals. Lactation Consultants can help improve a baby's latch to ease sore nipples and increase the amount of milk a baby gets. Speech therapists can help the tongue relearn movements to get baby to eat better. Craniosacral therapists and chiropractors can help relax and move tight muscles.

More Information:

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Websites:

- www.breastfeedingusa.org/content/article/tell-me-about-tongue-ties
- www.kiddsteeth.com
- www.cwgenna.com/quickhelp.html
- www.tonguetiehelp.org

Catherine Horsfall, *Tongue-tie: Breastfeeding and Beyond. A parents' guide to diagnosis, division and after-care*; available for e-download through amazon.com, \$7.99

