



## Tongue-tie

### What Is Tongue-Tie?

Tongue-tie, also known as ankyloglossia, is a condition some babies are born with that limits their tongue movements. To do its job well, the tongue needs to be able to reach almost every part of the mouth with a full range of motion which lets you make different sounds when you speak. It also helps you swallow and sweep away bits of food to keep your mouth clean.



Lingual Frenulum

Tongue-tie means there's a problem with the lingual frenulum, a small stretch of tissue that connects the underside of your tongue to the bottom of your mouth. It might be too short and tight, or attached way up near the tip of the tongue.

In mild cases, there might be only a tiny fold of tissue holding the tip of the tongue in place. In more extreme cases, the entire bottom of the tongue is attached to the floor of the mouth.

About 10% of newborns have ankyloglossia.



### What does a baby with tongue-tie look like?

The shape of the tip of the tongue when they are crying or lifting their tongue might look like a little heart. You might also notice that your baby's tongue:

- Cannot move far from side to side
- Cannot reach the upper gums or roof of the mouth
- Cannot stick out past the gums
- Cannot curl toward their nose or lick their lips

You could also look for the frenulum when the baby cries or yawns the tongue will draw back, and the frenulum will be tight and short.

### Tongue-Tie Causes and Risk Factors

- During a fetus' development in the womb, the lingual frenulum is stuck to the tongue. Before the baby is born, the membrane usually thins and separates from the tongue, so there's free range of motion. Sometimes, the separation doesn't happen for unknown reasons causing tongue tie.
- Male infants are about twice as likely to be tongue-tied as females
- More common in first-born babies.
- However, the baby's race or ethnicity doesn't seem to make any difference.



### Tongue-Tie Symptoms

The condition is often found because of problems with breastfeeding. The newborn may:

- Failure to latch well
- Tends to chew more than suck
- Does not gain weight the way as expect
- Feeds for a long time, taking short break, and then feeds for another long stretch
- Is fussy when trying to feed
- Makes a clicking sound while feeding
- Seems hungry all the time

Along with your baby's symptoms, the mother may have:

- Pain during and after breastfeeding
- Sore or cracked nipples
- Mastitis, or inflammation or infection of the breast
- Low milk supply

In older children, you should look for signs such as:

- Not pronouncing certain sounds like "t," "th," "d," "r," "l," and "s"
- Trouble swallowing or moving their tongue from side to side
- Trouble licking an ice cream cone
- Trouble playing a wind instrument
- Does tongue-tie affect speech?



*Tongue-tie doesn't delay your child's progress in learning to speak but may result in difficulties pronouncing certain letters. Tongue-tie may not be the reason for your child's speech problem*

### **Tongue-Tie Treatment**

Tongue tie should never be treated at home. Doctors will evaluate tongue tie severity and recommend therapy. Most will choose a wait-and-see approach since the frenulum may release on its own or not create long-term problems.

Your child may be referred to a specialist for minimally invasive surgery if necessary.

Before surgery, a doctor may recommend a speech therapist or lactation consultant for speech or nursing concerns.

