

## Maternity

# Restrictive frenulum and feeding your baby

Most people have a stretchy piece of skin under their tongue. This is called the lingual frenulum. When a baby is growing in the womb, this skin helps guide the shape of the baby's mouth. Usually before a baby is born, it moves further back on the tongue.

**Just having a lingual frenulum that you can see, or feel does not mean someone is tongue tied.**

**Tongue-tie**, also known as ankyloglossia, is when this piece of skin is too short or too tight, making it hard for the tongue to move normally. Tongue tie can only be diagnosed by a tongue tie practitioner who assesses how the tongue moves when feeding.

If you look in a mirror, you can see your own **lingual frenulum** under your tongue and see how it moves with different tongue movements.

A study of 200 babies found that almost all of them (99.5%) had a lingual frenulum, but only 3% needed treatment to fix tongue tie. For most babies, the frenulum is just a normal part of the mouth and does not cause problems.

## How can a frenulum affect feeding?

A frenulum may not affect feeding at all. This is called a non-restrictive frenulum. What matters is how well the tongue moves, not how it looks. Some babies have difficulty feeding, so they may be checked by a specialist. Most feeding problems in newborns can be fixed with good positioning and attachment.

The type of birth, if your baby was born early or any medications taken during birth can also affect feeding at first.

A lingual frenulum that is restrictive can affect both breast and bottle feeding. Midwives and maternity support workers can help, and in most cases, feeding improves without treatment.



## Patient Information

### Effects on Breastfeeding

If a baby has trouble breastfeeding, they might:

- Have difficulty attaching to the breast or staying attached for a full feed
- Be unsettled or still hungry after feeds (babies feed often at first - at least 8 to 16 times a day)
- Not gain enough weight
- Make clicking sounds when feeding
- Have colic, wind, or hiccups
- Vomit a lot after feeding (reflux)
- Sore nipples
- Too little or too much milk
- Misshapen nipples after feeds
- Regular breast infections

Most times these problems are just from the baby's position when feeding, so it's good to get help from a midwife or feeding specialist.

### Effects on bottle feeding

If your baby has trouble bottle feeding, they might:

- Dribble milk out when feeding
- Make clicking sounds when feeding
- Get tired before finishing
- Cough or choke on milk
- Have wind, hiccups, or reflux

Feeding problems can have other causes too, so it is important a feeding specialist helps you use paced feeding techniques.

### Treatment options

You will be referred to the hospital tongue tie clinic. If your baby is diagnosed with a restrictive frenulum (tongue tie) affecting feeding, you will talk about what to do next. They will check:

- Your baby's feeding, birth, and medical history
- Family history of tongue-tie
- Your baby's tongue movement and tongue-tie symptoms
- Treatment options

## Patient Information

You have two options:

- **Do nothing:** Sometimes, the skin tears by itself during as your child grows, and tongue can improve.
- **Try body work (like cranial sacral therapy or osteopathy):** Some people find this works, but there is not a lot of research yet, and it's not funded by the NHS.
- **Have a tongue-tie division**

If your baby is under 10 weeks and you notice symptoms, ask a health professional for a referral to the tongue tie clinic. After 8 weeks, you will need a GP to refer to an ENT specialist.

## Useful resources

- NICE Guideline division of ankyloglossia (tongue tie ) for breastfeeding available at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg149>
- Association of tongue tie practitioners ATP [www.tongue-tie.org.uk](http://www.tongue-tie.org.uk)
- la leche league: <http://www.laleche.org.uk/>
- Breastfeeding network <http://www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tongue-tie/>
- <https://wfiles.mycourse.app/66b3441b09ce33f16e8bbcec-public/publicFiles/Parents-Guide-to-Tongue-tie-2025.pdf>

## Useful contacts

- Coventry Infant Feeding Support Team: 0790 4984 620  
Open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- Warwickshire SWFT Infant Feeding Support Team  
[swg-tr.breastfeedingnorth@nhs.net](mailto:swg-tr.breastfeedingnorth@nhs.net)  
<https://linktr.ee/nhswarwickshirebreastfeeding>
- National Breastfeeding Helpline
- Telephone: 0300 100 0212 (09:00am to 09:00pm)
- NCT Breastfeeding Helpline
- Telephone: 0300 330 0700 (08:00am to 10:00pm)
- The Breastfeeding Network Support line: 0300 100 0210
- La Leche League Helpline: 0845 120 2918
- Association of Breastfeeding Mothers: 08444 122 949

## Patient Information

You may find it useful to visit the [UHCW Infant Feeding Linktree](#) for more information about antenatal expression of colostrum, and for a video showing how to hand express.



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