

Mister Lactation Doctor

Tongue Tie – Separating Fact from Fiction

Ankyloglossia ('Tongue Tie') is a frenulum (an elastic piece of tissue) located below the tongue that restricts tongue movement and, potentially, impedes normal breastfeeding. Tongue ties have become a popular topic in recent years, but the presence of a frenulum does not always equal a tongue tie and not all tongue ties can be visualized. A true tongue tie incorporates both the appearance of the frenulum and function of the tongue.

I have several cases where I can appreciate a frenulum, but there are no current breastfeeding concerns. As well, there are times where an individual is having a multitude of struggles breastfeeding (i.e. nipple damage, baby is not fully draining the breast, baby frequently pops-off the nipple, etc.), but a frenulum is difficult to visualize. You have to incorporate your findings against the backdrop of how breastfeeding is going as a whole when assessing for a tongue tie.

Symptoms of a tongue tie:

- Damaged nipples.
- Nipple pain throughout the duration of feeding.
- Baby falling asleep at the breast after only a few minutes (from using extra energy to compensate for less effective suck).
- (Possibly) engorged breasts from baby being less effective at draining the breasts.

What you can do:

- Tell your doctor how far your baby can extend their tongue (beyond their bottom lip, to the bottom lip, etc.).
- The shape of the tongue when your baby cries.

- How breastfeeding is going AS A WHOLE.
- Any family history of tongue ties in the family.

Your physician will also assess the baby's suck and tongue movements. If a tongue tie is present and is leading to issues with breastfeeding, a frenotomy ('tongue tie release') may be considered. If done by a trained professional, this can be a very quick and safe procedure with minimal bleeding and, hopefully, immediate results.

After a frenotomy is performed, you must remember to massage the area under the tongue that was clipped, in a side-to-side or up-and-down motion, before every feed, for 3 weeks, or else your baby runs the risk of a tongue tie re-forming. Please see the accompanying YouTube video for a demonstration and further details on this mechanism.

Always remember, you are doing a wonderful job!

Take care,



Mister Lactation Doctor
Dr. Brian Hartman MD, CCFP

Instagram: [@misterlactationdoctor](https://www.instagram.com/misterlactationdoctor)
Website: www.misterlactationdoctor.com
[Mister Lactation Doctor - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)