

TIPS® Toolkit for Tongue tie



What is tongue tie?

- Tongue tie is also called ankyloglossia. When a baby has tongue tie, the membrane which holds the tongue in place at the floor of the mouth is thicker or shorter than normal. This condition is graded from 1 to 4 (grade 1 being the most severe).
- Tongue tie may not cause problems for your baby, but it can interfere with the successful establishment of breastfeeding. It can also sometimes affect speech, the development of the mouth and jaw and even kissing in the long term.

How will I know if my baby has tongue tie?

- You may notice that your baby's tongue remains fixed or low in at the bottom of their mouth. This is especially noticeable when your baby is crying. Their tongue may not move very much. You can see a tongue tie before treatment in the top two photographs on the right.
- There are other signs to look out for. Your baby may feed frequently, be unsettled, or not put on enough weight gain (despite constant feeding). You may get sore nipples (for no apparent reason) and notice a reduction in your milk supply - this is the result of poor attachment caused by the tongue tie. If this happens, you should speak to a health professional. They will be able to diagnose tongue tie and arrange for treatment, if necessary.

How is tongue tie treated?

- Treatment is relatively simple: the tongue tie is simply snipped. Your midwife, lactation consultant or healthcare professional will arrange treatment for you locally. This should only be carried out by a trained professional.
- Snipping the tongue tie solves the problem instantly with few, if any, side-effects. Occasionally, the initial snip fails to cure the problem, and sometimes scar tissue can grow making a second snip necessary.

Photos show baby's progress after treatment.



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Baby with tongue tie grade 1 - before treatment



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One day after the snip



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Two days after the snip



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All healed!



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Three weeks after the snip



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Four days after the snip



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Three days after the snip

How can I find out more?

Online - visit:

www.nice.org.uk - NICE Guidelines on the division of tongue-tie

www.babyfriendly.org.uk - UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative guidance

www.tonguetie.net - information for people who have tongue tie, their families and professional helpers

www.lcgb.org - tongue tie and infant feeding leaflet available from the Lactation Consultants of Great Britain website

www.kellymom.com - information about breastfeeding a baby with tongue tie

Read: Tongue Tie - From Confusion to Clarity. Carmen Fernando's book provides very helpful information for those with a tongue tie, the parents of children with a tongue tie and health professionals involved in the treatment of this condition.

Listen to Rachel Hillan's podcast on www.midirs.co.uk. Infant Feeding Advisor at North Bristol Trust, Rachel talks about the effects of tongue tie in relation to breastfeeding, feeding and weaning

Where can I go for treatment?

www.babyfriendly.org.uk - contact details for hospitals that provide tongue tie treatment

www.lcgb.org - contact details for private lactation consultants throughout the UK

www.chilternbreastfeeding.co.uk - Chiltern Breastfeeding Partnership, where International Board Certified Lactation Consultants Luci Lishman and Addy Henderson also specialise in the treatment of tongue tie. For more information call: 01844 273 416

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