

Breastfeeding and tongue tie

This leaflet offers more information about breastfeeding with your baby's tongue tie.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of the infant feeding team or midwife in charge of your care.

What is tongue tie and why has my baby got it?

Tongue tie is when the membrane under your baby's tongue (the frenulum) is shortened or tight and may stop them moving their tongue fully.

This can affect your baby breastfeeding.

Just because your baby has a tongue tie doesn't mean they will automatically have trouble breastfeeding. All babies need to learn to feed at the breast so it's worth waiting for them to try a few times and for your milk to have come in before deciding on any treatment.

What are the signs and symptoms?

A tongue tie can look different in different babies. The frenulum may go all the way to the tip of the tongue and make it look heart shaped, or it may be hard to see and hidden under the tongue at the back of the mouth.

How can it affect breastfeeding?

Tongue tie does not always cause problems - many babies will still be able to breastfeed.

To feed properly your baby needs to be in a good position and attached well. It can take time to get this right. Your baby needs to be able to lift their tongue up and over their lower gum, so your nipple is cushioned and won't get damaged when your baby latches on.

Tongue-tie could stop your baby being able to stretch their tongue enough or open their mouth wide enough to latch onto your nipples properly.

This may cause your baby to:

- get tired and frustrated because they keep slipping off and can't get a whole feed
- have short, very frequent or very long feeds lasting over an hour but still be hungry
- have wind because they are taking in air when they try to reattach to your nipple
- have slow weight gain
- make a clicking sound when they suck.

It may also cause you to:

- have painful and damaged nipples, putting you at risk of mastitis and other infections
- have compressed nipples after a feed
- have a reduced milk supply.

What treatments are available?

Any problems might be solved by holding your baby in different positions for attachment.

If the symptoms don't go away you could think about your baby having a simple procedure to release the tightness under the tongue. This is called a frenulotomy and only takes a couple of seconds. Your baby should be able to feed straight afterwards. No anaesthetic is needed, but there are some risks that go along with a frenulotomy. Please talk to your midwife or the infant feeding team to find out more.

Gwillim ward staff or your community midwife can refer you to the clinic at St Georges where the frenulotomy can be done.

Useful sources of information

Breastfeeding network 0300 100 0210 (9.30am to 9.30pm)

www.breastfeedingnetwork.org

Le Leche League 0845 120 2918

www.laleche.org.uk

www.bestbeginnings.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about breastfeeding and tongue tie, please contact the infant feeding team on 07766 800 365 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). Out of hours, please contact 02987 252 012.

If you are asking patients to bleep a member of staff, please include instructions.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

