

## What is tongue tie?

Tongue tie or ankyloglossia is a condition where a thin piece of membrane under the baby's tongue, called the lingual frenulum, is unusually short. The tongue may appear heart shaped, forked or look tethered at the tip.

Research has shown that one in ten babies have some form of tongue tie. It is more common in boys (about 60%) and there may be a family history of tongue tie.

In many cases a tongue tie may not cause any problems. In some cases it may interfere with baby's ability to breastfeed and occasionally to bottle feed.



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With breastfeeding, a tongue tie may cause pain and trauma to the nipple, poor breast milk intake and if this continues, a decrease in milk supply.

## Symptoms of a tongue tie

### Mother:

- Nipple pain and damage
- Misshapen nipple following a breastfeed
- Reduced milk supply

### Baby:

- Slips off the nipple
- Frequent loss of suction during a feed
- A clicking sound while breastfeeding
- Frequent or long breastfeeds
- Failure to gain weight

## Assessment of baby's tongue tie

If your midwife or health care provider has checked your baby's mouth and found a tongue tie which is causing feeding problems, they will refer your baby for a tongue tie assessment.

They will look at whether (or not) the tongue:

- Can poke out past baby's lips
- Can touch the roof of baby's mouth
- Can reach the sides of baby's mouth
- Is heart shaped or tied to the floor of baby's mouth

The tongue tie can be at the front, middle or back of the underside of the tongue.

## Where will the tongue tie release be done?

A release can be done by a trained health professional in an out-patient setting without baby having any anaesthetic. If baby needs pain relief they can be offered breast milk or sucrose.

Before releasing baby's tongue tie your health professional will:

- Carefully examine your baby's mouth
- Take a complete history to exclude other causes of feeding difficulties or bleeding disorders
- Discuss with you the risk and benefits of tongue tie release
- Make sure baby has been given their Vitamin K injection. Vitamin K is given to help prevent bleeding
- Ask you to sign a consent form for your baby to have the tongue tie released

## Releasing the tongue tie

An assistant will help hold baby during the tongue tie release. The tongue tie is released with a small pair of sterile scissors.

There is usually little or no bleeding and your baby can be breastfed immediately after the procedure.

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Your baby will need to be watched for 15 – 30 minutes after the tongue tie release. There may be a little white patch under baby's tongue which may take 24-48 hours to heal. This does not seem to cause any discomfort to baby.

who referred you for the tongue tie release or the health care professional who did baby's tongue tie release.

### **What are the complications of tongue tie release?**

Possible complications of tongue tie release are bleeding or infection. These complications are rare and do not happen very often.

### **Who will follow-up my baby after the tongue tie release?**

You and your baby will be followed up by the person who referred you for the tongue tie release, and/or by the health care professional who did the tongue tie release to make sure baby's feeding has improved.

[Guidance for parents in the event of bleeding post tongue tie release](#) CapitalDocs ID 1.102949

Sometimes the wound under baby's tongue may bleed after the tongue tie release once you have got home. If you notice any blood in baby's mouth, try feeding baby with breast or bottle, whichever is baby's usual feeding method. The compression caused by feeding should help stop the bleeding in a few minutes. If the bleeding is heavy (you can see a lot of blood) or does not stop within 15 minutes after trying the above options, you will need to apply direct pressure to the wound under baby's tongue with one finger using a clean piece of gauze or muslin for 5 minutes. Do not apply pressure under baby's chin as this can affect their breathing. If bleeding continues after this time, continue with pressure to the wound and take baby to hospital or call an ambulance.

**If at any time baby is struggling to breath or becomes pale and floppy, call 111 for ambulance assistance.**

<http://www.tongue-tie.org.uk/tongue-tie-division-control-of-bleeding.html>

### **Contact details**

If you have any concerns after your baby's tongue tie release procedure, please contact the person

