

BREASTFEEDING ANSWERS

Tongue-Tie & Breastfeeding

A baby with a tongue-tie may have difficulty breastfeeding. A tongue-tie may restrict movement of the tongue because the **frenulum** may be tight and/or thick. Most babies with a tongue-tie do not have feeding problems. Some tongue-tie issues can be helped by trying different feeding positions. You may consider a **frenotomy** (“tongue tie release”) if feeding problems continue after you have received breastfeeding support.

Frenulum – the tissue that attaches the tongue to the floor of the mouth

Frenotomy – a procedure which involves the “snipping” of the frenulum

Your baby may:

- Have difficulty latching or staying latched (poor latch).
- Feed continuously while awake (since baby is not drinking enough milk while at the breast, and/or the flow of milk is slow).
- Have slow weight gain.

Parents may:

- Have nipple pain and trauma
- Eventually have low milk production

How is a frenotomy done?

- This is a simple procedure that can be done in a healthcare provider's office. A frenotomy involves no stitches and is usually done without anesthesia.
- Your baby will be returned to you to breastfeed immediately after the procedure. Nursing is thought to reduce scarring, and help the frenulum stay released
- You will be given instructions for post-procedure care from your healthcare provider

How do I get a referral for a frenotomy?

- A healthcare provider will need to send a referral to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Specialist (or other doctor able to do frenotomies).
- Some dentists provide frenotomies using a laser. No referral is needed. This is a private service (will have a fee).

Most parents notice a change to feeding after a frenotomy is performed. You may notice a change in the baby's latch and less nipple pain. This may happen immediately after the procedure or may take longer (a week or two). You may require some additional support as you continue to work on your baby's latch and establishing your milk supply.

For breastfeeding support, please call:

Family Health Information Line at 705-474-1400 ext. 5351 or healthy.families@healthunit.ca. Our nurses are available from 8:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday

References:

Breastfeeding Answers: A Guide for Helping Families, Second Edition *by Nancy Mohrbacher*