

Tongue-Tie Division (baby)

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is a tongue-tie?

As a baby develops in the womb, the tongue separates from the bottom of the mouth. A tongue-tie happens when the tongue does not separate enough. Some tongue-ties are thin while others may be chunky.

Some tongue-ties do not cause problems – babies can feed and older children can talk normally. Other tongue-ties do cause problems.

What are the benefits of tongue-tie division?

Your baby should be able to feed better, less often and for shorter periods of time.

Are there any alternatives to tongue-tie division?

Some tongue-ties divide on their own, tear on the lower teeth or when your baby chews on something.

If the tongue-tie is causing feeding problems, dividing the tongue-tie is the only effective treatment.

What does the procedure involve?

Try not to feed your baby for 1 to 2 hours before the procedure.

If your baby is young and has no teeth, they will not need an anaesthetic. The healthcare team will gently wrap your baby so they cannot move around and then carefully divide the tongue-tie with surgical scissors. The procedure will not hurt your baby as there are very few nerves in that part of the mouth.

What complications can happen?

Tongue-tie division complications

- Discomfort
- Dark blood in your baby's nappy or a small amount of dark blood in their vomit
- Infection
- Ulcer under the tongue
- Damage to the tubes that drain saliva

- The tongue-tie coming back
- No difference in how well your baby feeds

How soon will my baby recover?

Babies under 3 weeks old usually go straight back to feeding. Older babies may take a day to settle.

Wounds in the mouth usually heal quickly.

You will need to re-teach your baby how to breastfeed without chomping.

Summary

A tongue-tie joins the tongue to the bottom of the mouth. Dividing the tongue-tie should allow your baby to feed better.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

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Acknowledgements

Reviewer

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Illustrator

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A tongue-tie