

ANKLYOGLOSSIA/ TONGUE TIE

Many mothers often mistakenly assume that if they cannot successfully breastfeed there is something wrong with them. The opposite is true. Infants are often born with a condition called Ankyloglossia, or tongue tie. A tongue tie occurs when the embryological remnant of the tissue attaching the tongue to the floor of the mouth has not disappeared during fetal development.

Common ideas and myths that interfere with proper care and treatment:

- Tongue ties do not exist
- Tongue ties will not affect nursing
- Tongue ties will correct themselves
- A tight lingual frenulum will stretch or tear without treatment
- Ankyloglossia does not cause maternal discomfort
- Ankyloglossia does not affect developing speech

“Ankyloglossia in breastfeeding infants can cause ineffective latch, inadequate milk transfer, and maternal nipple pain, resulting in untimely weaning.”

--Dr. Lawrence Kotlow

Treatment

The treatment for tongue tie is a simple procedure and there are normally no complications. Frenotomy (a.k.a. frenulotomy or frenulectomy) is the procedure in which the lingual frenulum is cut. Frenotomy is indicated when the abnormal frenulum is impairing the infant's ability to breastfeed. The procedure involves holding the tongue up towards the roof of the mouth to make the frenulum taut, then cutting through the white, fascia-like tissue along a line parallel with, and fairly close to, the tongue. The cut is made in a single motion in less than a second. Anesthesia is not necessary. Normally, there is only a drop of blood or less.

For very young infants (less than six-weeks-old), it may be done in the office of the physician. General anesthesia may be recommended when Frenotomy is performed on older children. But in some cases, it can be done in the physician's office under local anesthesia. **While Frenotomy is relatively simple, it can yield big results.**

Helpful Websites

Dr. Kotlow's website: www.kiddsteeth.com

Newman Breastfeeding site: www.nbci.ca

Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Website: www.bfmed.org

Adapted from Lawrence Kotlow, 2010 & Stanford School of Medicine (<http://newborns.stanford.edu/Frenotomy.html>)