

## Tongue-Tie

### What is a tongue-tie?

Underneath your tongue is a small fold of tissue that limits the movements of your tongue. Everyone has one of these and it is called a frenulum. The term 'tongue-tie' indicates that the frenulum is unusually short and tight. This can lead to reduced movement in the tongue. The tongue tip may appear blunt, forked or have a heart-shaped appearance.

A person with a tongue-tie may not be able to:

- Stick out their tongue beyond their lower teeth
- Get their tongue to reach the top of their mouth, called the alveolar ridge (the hard part just behind your upper front teeth). The tongue comes into contact with this part of your mouth for some speech sounds.

### Will it affect my child's speech?

- A tongue-tie does not usually impair speech.
- Even those whose frenulum is attached very close to the tongue tip under the tongue can have normal sounding speech.
- Some individuals may have imprecise articulation, especially when talking quickly.
- Children may find some sounds more difficult.
- Tongue-ties may look like this:



### Tongue-tie and feeding difficulties:

A child with a tongue-tie may have difficulties with feeding as a baby; they may also find it difficult to clear food from inside and or outside of their mouth.

Please speak to your GP, health visitor or a lactation consultant if you are concerned about a tongue-tie and feeding, including if you are finding breastfeeding difficult.

They will be able to check for a tongue-tie and, if appropriate, a referral for a simple surgical procedure can be made at the earliest possible age.

You could also ask your child's dentist about oral hygiene implications at a check-up appointment.

## **Tongue-tie and speech sound difficulties**

There is no evidence to suggest that tongue-tie is related to delayed onset of speech or language, despite common parental concern.

However, you can speak to a speech and language therapist at a telephone advice line call if you have concerns about your child's speech and language development ([www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-referrals](http://www.cpft.nhs.uk/speech-and-language-therapy-referrals))

## **Surgical intervention for tongue-tie**

Not every tongue-tie requires surgery. Doctors often look into the range of movements of the tongue. They may look at the two points of attachment of the frenulum. They may also discuss the child's speech development.

Some tongue-ties may break or loosen without any intervention. Others may need surgery to increase mobility of the tongue. Cutting a tongue-tie for a breastfed baby can dramatically improve ease of feeding and lessen pain for the mother.