

TONGUE TIE

CONNECTICUT PEDIATRIC OTOLARYNGOLOGY

What is tongue-tied?

Tongue tie is a minor defect of the mouth which limits tongue mobility. There is a band of tissue located under your tongue, attaching the tongue to the floor of the mouth, which is called the frenulum. Tongue tie occurs when the frenulum is too tight. If the frenulum is too tight or short, the tongue is unable to touch the roof of the mouth. The condition is present from birth. The medical term for tongue tie is ankyloglossia.

Is being tongue tied harmful to my child?

The tongue is one of the most important muscles for speech and swallowing. For this reason your child may have difficulty with feeding or speech problems. For less severe situations, the frenulum gradually stretches and there is no problem.

Does my child need Treatment?

Infants-

A baby with a tongue tie can have difficulty feeding and sucking and may have poor weight gain. If this is the case, treatment is needed immediately.

In Toddlers and Older Children-

Some children with tongue tie may have a speech impediment. Around the age of three, speech problems may become noticeable, especially articulation of the sounds - l, r, t, d, n, th, sh, and z (which require tongue mobility). It becomes frustrating to children when they are not being understood outside of the family. Although, there is no obvious way to tell in infancy which children will have speech difficulties later, the following characteristics are common:

- V-shaped notch at the tip of the tongue
- Inability to stick out the tongue past the lower lip
- Inability to touch the roof of the mouth
- Difficulty moving the tongue from side to side

How is Tongue-tie Treated?

Tongue-tie surgery is a quick and painless procedure and is called a frenuloplasty or frenulectomy. It consists of releasing the frenulum in order to allow tongue mobility. There are rarely any complications. For very young infants (less than six-weeks-old) and in older children (8 years and up), it may be done at the bedside in hospitals or in the otolaryngology office. Older children will have the procedure done under general anesthesia in the operating room. While frenulectomy is relatively simple, it can yield big results with feeding in infancy and restoring ease of speech and self-esteem in toddlers and older children.

If you ever have questions or concerns, we would be happy to talk to you or see your child at any time.