

Gloss ~~A~~ry

Tongue-tie

Tongue-tie, also called Ankyloglossia, is thought to affect approximately 4-11% of newborn babies.

Tongue-tie occurs where the strip of skin (the lingual frenulum) connecting the underside of the baby's tongue to the floor of the mouth is shorter and tighter than usual.

Tongue-tie is typically assumed to cause difficulties with breastfeeding, and speech acquisition.

What to look out for

Signs include:

- Feeding difficulties
- Difficulty lifting the tongue to the upper ridge of gums, or with moving it side to side
- Difficulty sticking the tongue out
- Tongue looks heart shaped or notched when they stick it out.

Assessment

If you have any concerns about your baby's feeding and think there is a tongue-tie, consult your midwife, health visitor or GP. It's sometimes diagnosed during a baby's neonatal check but is not always easy to spot.

In general, a diagnosis of tongue-tie is made on the basis of anatomical appearance of the tongue, or on the functional impact on the individual. However there is no universal tool for assessing tongue-tie and no clear diagnostic criteria.

Treatment

Treatment is not necessary if your baby has a tongue-tie but can feed without problems. If feeding is affected then treatment involves a procedure called tongue-tie division.

Improvements in ease of feeding have been reported following division of the tongue-tie. However the research evidence is inconclusive. Many babies who have a tongue-tie can breastfeed successfully and go on to have normal speech, and only a minority of children with breastfeeding problems can be expected to have a tongue tie.

References

McBride C (2005) Tongue-tie. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 2005, 41 (5-6), 242-242

NHS Choices (2017) Tongue-tie.

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tongue-tie/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Reilly S (2004) *Bulletin*, January 2004, 20.

https://www.rcslt.org/docs/bulletin/2004/Jan_2004

Please note: Afasic does not hold copies of any referenced material. These publications should be available at academic libraries.

Organisations that can help

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
RCSLT

2 White Hart Yard
London SE1 1NX

Tel: 020 7378 1200

<https://www.rcslt.org/>

The professional body for speech and language therapists

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