



Breastfeeding Committee for Saskatchewan

www.thebcs.ca

Important:

If you feel you are having any breastfeeding difficulties that are not going away, please be assessed by someone who is knowledgeable about breastfeeding and can help you to improve things. An International Board Certified Lactation Consultant or IBCLC is an expert in breastfeeding.

For further information contact:

Local Public Health Nurse

International Board Certified
Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)

Local breastfeeding support
Group

References:

Baxter, R., Musso, M., Hughes, L., Lahey, L., Fabbie, P., Lovvorn, M., & Emanuel, M. (2018). *Tongue-tied: how a tiny string under the tongue impacts nursing, feeding, speech, and more*. Pelham, AL: Alabama Tongue-Tie Center.

[Genna, C. \(2008\). *Supporting sucking skills in breastfeeding infants*. Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett.](#)

[Ghaheri, B. \(n.d.\). Blog. Retrieved September 1, 2015.](#)

[Lawrence, K. \(2013\). *Breastfeeding Should be Fun and Enjoyable*. Retrieved September 1, 2015.](#)

Breastfeeding

Tethered Oral Tissues

Tongue tie and lip tie are common terms we hear these days, however they are medical diagnoses. Your lactation consultant may refer to a restriction in normal movement of tongue or lip, tight frenulums, or call them tethered oral tissues.

Tongue: Most people have a stretchy band of tissue between the tongue and the floor of the mouth. In some people this tissue, called a frenulum, is tighter than it should be. It may be right at the tip of the tongue or it may be all the way at the back. Your baby may not be able to lift his or her tongue up or it may look different when it lifts.

Lip: In this case the stretchy band of tissue is between the top lip and the gums. Sometimes this frenulum is also too tight. It may be attached to the front of the gum or even wrap over the edge where teeth will come in and attach behind the gum ridge.

How can these affect breastfeeding?

- Mothers are more likely to have sore or injured nipples
- Babies may not latch or suck well or may "bite"
- Babies get less milk which can lower mom's milk supply
- Feeds may be very long but baby not satisfied
- Baby may not gain weight well
- Babies are more likely to stop breastfeeding too early

What you can do:

If you suspect your baby may have tethered oral tissues (TOTs), or have been told they have a tongue or lip tie it is important to be assessed by someone who is knowledgeable in assessing for and recognizing these and the effects on breastfeeding. TOTs are a rapidly growing area of research in breastfeeding. Not all health care providers recognize them in all their forms.

An expert knows how to look at both the structure and function of the tongue and adjoining areas to make a thorough assessment. By performing a physical exam and feeding assessment, issues such as poor positioning, latch, or adjacent muscle tension will be identified, putting all the pieces together.

You may find an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC), a dentist, or an Ear Nose Throat Surgeon an expert who is familiar with them. An IBCLC is trained in looking at how tongue and lip tie affect breastfeeding and will help you to optimize you and your baby's breastfeeding experience.

Depending on what is assessed, you may be referred on further to a physician, a dentist or an Ear Nose Throat (ENT) specialist for a release of the lip or tongue tie.



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