Ankyloglossia “Tongue tie”

The Department of Speech Pathology
What is ankyloglossia (tongue tie)?

Tongue tie is a congenital oral anomaly

“*A condition in which the tip of the tongue cannot be protruded beyond the lower incisor teeth because of a short frenulum*”

Brinkman et al, 2004

Wallace, 1963
Overview

• Normal speech and feeding is able to be established despite the presence of a tongue tie
• There is insufficient evidence to support a link between tongue tie and speech impairment or feeding difficulty
• Children are able to develop normal feeding, speech and language despite the presence of a tongue tie
Controversies around tongue tie

• Attempts to define and classify tongue tie.
• No universal diagnostic classification has been adopted or validated
• Prevalence is difficult to report due to no agreed method of diagnosis or classification
  • Reported to range from 1.72% - 4.8% in neonates

• No systematic reviews of literature reporting the findings to date

“No research study has conclusively established a link between presence of tongue tie and poor outcome”

Brinkmann et al, 2004
Breastfeeding & tongue tie

- NHS National Institute for Clinical Evidence (NICE) in UK reviewed literature and based overview on 5 studies
  - 1 randomised control trial (RCT)
  - 3 case series
  - 1 cross over study

Refer to table 1 in NICE overview for details

There is limited evidence to support tongue tie division and no specific evidence to indicate adverse effects against the procedure

NHS, Swindon, Division of tongue-tie policy
Speech & tongue tie

- Small, uncontrolled studies have reported tongue tie may impact alveolar and tongue tip sounds
- Summary of literature, 33 research papers
  - Results ranges from TT rarely interfering with feeding, speech and generally requires no treatment to - enthusiastic support for frenotomy (often in lactation literature)

Lalakea et al, 2003

- Remains controversial which tongue ties need surgical intervention and which are best left to observation
- Lack of accepted definition and classification makes comparison of studies completed almost impossible
- Any reports of speech problems are subjective and difficult to categorize

Suter et al, 2009
Social / functional range of movement & tongue tie

• Some articles discuss anecdotal reports from individuals that raise issues relating to difficulty:
  • Licking ice cream
  • Tongue kissing

  Horton CE et al 1971

• This area of impact has only been reported sporadically in the literature

• If an individual experiences social impact of tongue tie and would like to consider surgical release, they may seek a surgical opinion from a Plastic Surgeon
SUMMARY

• There is a lack of evidence to link tongue tie to impact on speech and feeding

• A review of the clinical speech pathology services at RCH showed that almost all referrals for tongue tie assessment were appropriate for assessment by speech pathology community services

• If parents or children are seeking surgical opinion for tongue tie release, refer to Department of Plastic Surgery
References

NHS National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence NICE, Interventional procedures overview of division of ankyloglossia (tongue tie) in babies with difficulty breastfeeding


NHS Swindon, Tongue-tie division policy statement for breast fed infants 2011


Sutter VG, Bornstein MM. Ankyloglossia: facts and myths in diagnosis and treatment. *Journal of Periodontology* 2009; 80(8): 1204-19 (abstract only)

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- http://www.cssd.us/body.cfm?id=1186
- tonguetie.com.au
- entusa.com
Links

Find a lactation consultant
College of lactation consultants Victoria website

Find a local speech pathologist
Speech Pathology Australia website

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