



# Ankyloglossia “Tongue tie”

The Department of Speech Pathology

# What is ankyloglossia (tongue tie)?



Tongue tie is a congenital oral anomaly

Brinkman et al, 2004

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

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](#)

[Brinkmann S, Reilly S, Meara JG. Management of tongue-tie in children: A survey of paediatric surgeons in Australia. \*Journal of Paediatrics & Child Health\* 2004; \*\*40\*\*: 600-605](#)

[Lalakea, M. Messner, A. \(2003\) Ankyloglossia: Does it matter? \*Paediatric Clinics of North America\*, pp 381-397](#)

[NHS Swindon, Tongue-tie division policy statement for breast fed infants 2011](#)

[Segal LM, Stephenson R, Dawes M, Feldman P. Prevalence, diagnosis and treatment of ankyloglossia, methodological review. \*Canadian Family Physician\* 2007; \*\*53\*\*: 1027-1023](#)

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

Images on title page taken from:

- <http://www.cssd.us/body.cfm?id=1186>
- [tonguetie.com.au](http://tonguetie.com.au)
- [entusa.com](http://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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