

GREGORY J. ARTZ M.D.  
CLAUDELL COX M.D.  
ROBERT J. MELECA M.D.  
THOMAS W. PFENNIG D.O.  
JOSEPH C. TAYLOR M.D.



FACIAL PLASTIC & COSMETIC SURGERY

ALLERGY TESTING & TREATMENT

HEARING AID SALES & SERVICE

## FRENULECTOMY / FRENULOPLASTY

Tongue-tie (ankyloglossia) is a birth defect in which the tissue that attaches the tongue at the bottom of the mouth (lingual frenulum) is abnormally short. Movements of the tongue may be restricted, depending on the degree of attachment to the mouth. Tongue-tie is an inherited birth defect. Usually the mother, father, or a close relative also had the condition.

Many babies with tongue-tie do not have symptoms. The lingual frenulum stretches as the child grows or adapts to the tongue restriction. However, some children with tongue-tie have:

- Difficulty latching on the mother's breast and sucking because the tongue cannot move milk from the milk glands of the breast to the nipple. Bottle-fed babies usually do not have feeding problems because it is easy to get milk from the nipple of the bottle.
- Speech problems because the tip of the tongue cannot rise high enough to make (articulate) some sounds clearly, such as t, d, z, s, th, n, and l.
- Personal and social problems related to the restricted tongue movement. The restricted tongue can make it difficult to play a wind instrument or to clean food off the teeth with the tongue. A child with tongue-tie may be ridiculed by peers.

Tongue-tie usually is diagnosed by a physical examination of the mouth and the baby's symptoms. The health professional lifts the baby's tongue to see whether the lingual frenulum is short and the degree it extends to the tip of the tongue. In an older child or adult, the health professional observes the shape and movements of the tongue when it is protruded.

Many children with tongue-tie adapt to the tongue restriction or the lingual frenulum stretches as they grow. If your child has tongue-tie, you may choose to wait and see whether his or her lingual frenulum stretches on its own or whether surgery may be needed to release the tongue.

Surgery may be needed if your child has significant breast-feeding, speech, or personal or social problems caused by the tongue restriction. If surgery is done before 1 year of age, a simple procedure to clip the lingual frenulum (frenulectomy) is usually all that is needed to release the tongue.