

Tongue Tie

What is Tongue Tie?

Also known as 'Ankyloglossia' or 'anchored tongue' - is a common but often overlooked condition. It is seen at birth and causes a wide range of difficulties that affect the sufferer in different ways. Diagnosis and assessment are essential before taking any remedial action. In the past, there was little besides observation or anecdotal evidence to guide us towards a decision about whether to intervene. Now, both diagnosis and assessment of a tongue tie can be made by informed and qualified professionals.

Consequences of Untreated Tongue Tie

The consequences of untreated tongue tie are wide ranging and can affect structure and appearance of the face and teeth, as well as oral function. Thus, breastfeeding, eating, digestion, teeth, speech, kissing and social skills can be adversely affected. Some consequences, such as breastfeeding difficulties, can be experienced early; others, such as speaking and kissing, only become apparent in later life.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is one of the first independent pleasurable activities that a new baby experiences. It is widely recognized to be important both for the baby's health and nourishment, and for bonding to take place between mother and baby. A baby with a tongue tie often cannot make the necessary movements that allow feeding to be satisfying for both mother and baby; instead, the experience becomes one of frustration for the baby, and pain, guilt and failure for the mother.

Surgery

There are several options available when a tongue tie has been assessed and found to be restricting movement (i.e. when the frenum - the string that connects the tongue to the floor of the mouth - is recognized to be abnormal). Such a situation requires surgical correction by an appropriate professional. The age at which this procedure can be performed can range from 7 days to 70 years old.