

# Speech Therapy Assessment and Treatment of Tethered Oral Tissues (TOTs) Tongue Tie (Ankyloglossia), Lip Tie, Buccal Tie

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**Tethered Oral Tissues** or TOTs refers to small folds of tissue called frenula (also referred to as frenum or frenulum) that secure structures in the oral cavity and supports the motion of the tongue, lips and/or cheeks. We all have frenula, however, the frenula may become problematic when the tissue is too tight and/or restricts tension and mobility of the structures it supports. Tongue tie or the medical term called ankyloglossia can affect the way a person eats, speaks and swallows. In addition, it could affect the person's posture, oral hygiene, dentition and breathing patterns as well.

Identification of any oral restriction requires a physical and functional examination of the infant and/or child. At *Dentistry for Special People*, a full assessment begins with locating the restriction and identifying the amount of tension causing the underlying dysfunction and assessing any functional limitations the tie may be causing by our multidisciplinary treatment team that includes our dentists, dental hygienists, speech-language pathologist and referrals to lactation specialists and body work specialists as needed. Following a full assessment, the speech therapist will assist in the frenulum release with pre- and post exercises and speech, feeding and swallowing therapy as needed.

## Signs and Symptoms of Oral Restriction in Infants

### *Breast and/or bottle feeding difficulties*

- ◆ Difficulty latching
- ◆ Slips off breast easily (weak latch)
- ◆ Shallow or poor latch
- ◆ Refusing to nurse
- ◆ “Clicking” sounds while eating (breast or bottle)
- ◆ Presence of lip calluses or lip blisters (lip ties)
- ◆ Upper lip tucks in or under when feeding (lack of flaring out)
- ◆ Colic and/or excessive crying
- ◆ Failure to Thrive
- ◆ Difficulty with the introduction of solid foods
- ◆ Slow weight gain
- ◆ Gas, fussiness, reflux
- ◆ Gagging/spit up
- ◆ Mother reports excessive pain and damage to her nipples

### Symptoms in young children:

- ◆ Open mouth breathing
- ◆ Open mouth rest posture
- ◆ Sloppy/messy eating
- ◆ Mastication difficulty
- ◆ Reduced bolus control (inability to manage within oral cavity)
- ◆ Not advancing in texture or volume of solid foods
- ◆ Errors in sound production
- ◆ Poor oral hygiene
- ◆ Dental crowding, malocclusions
- ◆ Marked changes in face/jaw development
- ◆ Difficulty lifting the tongue to the upper teeth or moving the tongue from side to side
- ◆ Trouble sticking out the tongue past the lower front teeth
- ◆ A tongue that appears notched or heart shaped when stuck out

### Symptoms in an older child:

- ◆ Inadequate caloric intake due to reduce oral motor skill development and fatigue
- ◆ Tactile oral sensitivity or aversion
- ◆ Difficulty progressing to higher level solid foods (meats, vegetables and fruits)
- ◆ Swallowing challenges
- ◆ Picky eating
- ◆ Gagging and vomiting during meals