

**Frenulectomy (Tongue-tie Release) Exercises**

We have given you this factsheet because your baby is due to have a frenulectomy (a small procedure to release a tongue-tie). It contains a series of gentle tongue exercises to perform at home, before your baby’s frenulectomy.

**How will tongue tie exercises help my baby?**

After a frenulectomy, your baby will be able to move their tongue more easily, but this may not happen automatically. Tongue exercises encourage your baby to move their tongue, which can help them:

* Get used to their ‘new’ tongue
* Relearn normal tongue movement
* Strengthen their tongue muscle and improve their feeding technique

The exercises may also prevent scar tissue developing, and the need for a second frenulectomy.

**When should the tongue exercises be performed?**

We recommend beginning these exercises before your baby’s frenulectomy, if possible. This will help your baby to relax their facial muscles and prepare them for what to expect after the frenulectomy.

We also recommend performing the exercises before or halfway through a feed.

You may find it helpful to sing a short song while performing each exercise. This helps your baby anticipate the next exercise, which may make them feel more at ease.

**How often should the tongue exercises be performed?**

Each exercise should be performed 3 times a day for at least 3 weeks prior to your baby’s fenulectomy.

**Will the exercises hurt my baby?**

All the exercises should be enjoyable for your baby. However, your baby may only tolerate these exercises for a very short period of time at first. Stop preforming the exercises if your baby becomes upset or shows signs that they are not happy to continue. After a short while, try again.

Try remaining relaxed when carrying out these exercises, as this will help your baby to relax too. Skin to skin contact (holding your baby against your bare skin) will help keep you both calm during the exercises. It will also encourage your baby to feed and use their tongue.

**How to perform the tongue exercises**

1. Wash your hands thoroughly before performing the exercises (you may wish to wear gloves).
2. Gently place your baby in a comfortable position on your lap or on a soft surface. Make sure their head is in a neutral position and not tipped back too far.
3. Softly stroke your baby’s lips with your index finger. Then tap their top lip and wait for them to open their mouth.
4. Lightly touch and massage the tip of your baby’s tongue and lower lip with your finger to encourage them to stick out their tongue. You may find it helpful to poke your tongue out at the same time to encourage your baby to copy you.
5. Move your finger to the back of your baby’s lower gum on each side, while tickling their tongue at the same time. This will encourage your baby to move their tongue to the side. Then gently rub their upper and lower gums with your finger as though you are brushing their teeth.
6. Place your finger on the tip of your baby’s tongue and press gently back. Allow them to draw your finger into their mouth.
7. When your baby begins to suck on your finger, gently pull your finger slightly out of their mouth until they nearly let go and then let them suck your finger back in, as though playing tug of war.
8. If you notice that your baby humps the back of their tongue during feeds, try gently pressing down on the middle of their tongue when they open their mouth. Doing this in a fun, consistent way can sometimes help.
9. Lightly pull down your baby’s chin while they are sucking your finger to see how firm their sucking action is. This should gradually improve over time. Gentle chin support while you are feeding can also help to improve your baby’s attachment during a feed.
10. Gently stroke the sides of your baby’s tongue from back to front with your thumb and index finger, pushing the sides slightly in towards the center of their tongue. This is called a bilateral tongue hug with compression. This is done to stimulate the cupping of the tongue with the nipple or teat in the mouth.
11. Place your thumb inside your baby’s mouth, with your fingers on the outside, and gently stroke and massage their cheeks using a pinching action to relax their muscles.

1. For babies with an oversensitive gag reflex, gently touch the roof of your baby’s mouth (their palate). If your baby gags, stop immediately. You may need to gradually build up to this exercise. You can also stroke the roof of their mouth from side to side.
2. Finish the exercises by stroking your baby’s upper lip from the corner of their mouth to the center.

Gently stroking or massaging your baby’s face after you have finished the exercises can help improve their facial muscle tone. Skin-to-skin contact during or just after the exercises may also be helpful, as it will help you and your baby to relax and may encourage your baby to feed.