

## What Are Tongue and Lip Ties?

Tongue tie (Ankyloglossia) and lip tie are conditions present at birth that involve tight or restrictive bands of tissue called frenula.

**Tongue tie (ankyloglossia):** The strip of tissue under the tongue (lingual frenulum) is too short, thick, or tight, limiting tongue movement.

**Lip tie:** The tissue connecting the upper lip to the gums (labial frenulum) is unusually tight or thick, restricting how the lip moves or flanges outward.

Both can range from mild (barely noticeable) to severe (significantly restricting movement and function).

## Why Do They Matter?

The tongue and lips play essential roles in:

- Feeding (breastfeeding, bottle feeding, chewing)
- Speech development
- Oral hygiene
- Airway and breathing patterns

Restrictions can interfere with one or more of these functions.

## Long-Term Effects

If untreated, tongue and lip ties can contribute to a range of ongoing issues:

### 1. Feeding & Nutrition

Poor breastfeeding can lead to early weaning & Inadequate nutrition in infancy

### 2. Speech Development

Persistent articulation problems & Need for speech therapy

### 3. Dental & Orthodontic Issues

Narrow palate development, Crowded teeth, & Increased need for orthodontic treatment

### 4. Breathing & Airway Development

Chronic mouth breathing, Altered facial growth (sometimes called "long face syndrome"), & Increased risk of sleep-disordered breathing

### 5. Musculoskeletal Compensation

Jaw misalignment, Neck tension, shoulders, and upper back, & Postural issues

### 6. Social & Emotional Impact

Frustration with feeding or speaking & Self-consciousness about speech or oral function

Diagnosis is typically made by Midwives, Pediatricians, Lactation consultants, Pediatric dentists, or ENT (ear, nose, and throat) specialists.

## Treatment Options

1. Observation: Mild cases may not require intervention & Monitoring feeding, speech, and development
2. Therapy-Based Approaches: Lactation support, Speech therapy, & Myofunctional therapy (exercises to improve oral muscle function)
3. Surgical Treatment: Frenotomy: Simple release of the tissue (often done in infants) OR Frenectomy/Frenuloplasty: More involved procedures for thicker or complex ties. (These are usually quick procedures, especially in infants, with minimal recovery time.)

## When to Seek Help

Consider evaluation if you notice: Feeding struggles in infancy, Persistent speech difficulties, Chronic mouth breathing or snoring, Jaw pain/tension without clear cause.

## Symptoms by Age Group

### Babies (Infants)

- Feeding Difficulties
- Trouble latching during breastfeeding
- Frequent slipping off the breast or bottle
- Clicking sounds while feeding
- Long feeding sessions or falling asleep quickly while feeding
- Poor weight gain
- Signs in the Mother (if breastfeeding)
- Nipple pain or damage
- Compressed or misshapen nipples after feeding
- Recurrent mastitis or clogged ducts
- Physical Signs
- Heart-shaped tongue tip when crying (tongue tie)
- Limited tongue lift or extension
- Upper lip cannot flange outward (lip tie)

### Children

- Eating & Oral Function
- Picky eating or difficulty chewing certain textures
- Gagging easily
- Messy eating or poor tongue coordination
- Speech Issues
- Difficulty with certain sounds (especially "t," "d," "l," "r," "th")
- Speech delay or unclear articulation
- Dental & Oral Health
- Gaps between front teeth (lip tie)
- Increased cavities due to food trapping
- Difficulty licking lips or clearing food from teeth
- Other Clues
- Mouth breathing
- Snoring or restless sleep
- Difficulty sticking tongue out past lips

### Adults

- Many adults have undiagnosed tongue or lip ties.
- Common Symptoms
- Jaw pain or tightness
- Neck and shoulder tension
- Chronic headaches or migraines
- Speech fatigue
- Difficulty swallowing pills
- Oral & Dental Issues
- Gum recession
- Persistent bad breath (due to trapped bacteria)
- Difficulty maintaining oral hygiene
- Sleep & Breathing
- Mouth breathing
- Snoring or sleep-disordered breathing (sometimes linked with Sleep Apnea)