

inspection. The palate is normally highly arched and somewhat narrow. Rarely, teeth may be present. A common finding is **Epstein pearls**, small, white, epithelial cysts along both sides of the midline of the hard palate. They are insignificant and disappear in several weeks.

The **frenulum** of the upper lip is a band of thick pink tissue that lies under the inner surface of the upper lip and extends to the maxillary alveolar ridge. It is particularly evident when the infant yawns or smiles. It disappears as the maxilla grows.

The lingual frenulum attaches the underside of the tongue to the lower palate midway between the ventral surface of the tongue and the tip. In some cases, a tight lingual frenulum, formerly referred to as *tongue-tie*, may restrict adequate sucking. Further evaluation may be required to ascertain adequate sucking, particularly in breastfed infants. The treatment for a tight lingual frenulum advocated by the [American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Fetus and Newborn \(2010\)](#) is **frenotomy**, a safe and effective surgical procedure that may improve comfort, effectiveness, and ease of breastfeeding for the mother and infant ([Brookes and Bowley, 2014](#); [Forlenza, Paradise Black, McNamara, et al, 2010](#)). Research continues in an effort to determine how best to select which infants will benefit from the procedure and when to perform it ([Emond, Ingram, Johnson, et al, 2014](#); [Power and Murphy, 2015](#)).

Elicit the sucking reflex by placing a nipple or nonlatex gloved finger in the infant's mouth. The infant should exhibit a strong, vigorous suck. The rooting reflex is elicited by stroking the cheek and noting the infant's response of turning toward the stimulated side and sucking.

The uvula can be inspected while the infant is crying and the chin is depressed. However, it may be retracted upward and backward during crying. Tonsillar tissue is generally not seen in newborns. **Natal teeth**, teeth present at birth, as opposed to **neonatal teeth**, which erupt during the first month of life, are seen infrequently and erupt chiefly at the position of the lower incisors. Teeth are reported because they are frequently found with developmental abnormalities and syndromes, including cleft lip and palate. Most natal teeth are loosely attached. However, current thinking suggests preserving them until they exfoliate naturally ([Maheswari, Kumar, Karunakaran, et al, 2012](#)) unless the tooth is attached loosely or