

Tongue-tie and breastfeeding

Tongue-tie is when a baby cannot move their tongue freely because they have a short, tight or thick frenulum. This is the skin attaching the tongue to the base of the mouth.

Tongue-tie affects a low percentage of babies. It is slightly more common in boys than in girls.

Tongue-tie may restrict the movement of your baby's tongue and make feeding difficult. But many will not have any feeding difficulties.

Not all babies with tongue-tie need treatment.



Tongue tie

Tongue-tie challenges

Tongue-tie may interfere with your baby attaching (latching) to your breast. It may also reduce the amount of milk your baby gets. This can result in poor weight gain and it can also reduce your breast milk supply.

Challenges for the baby with tongue-tie may include:

- difficulty in getting a deep attachment to the breast
- difficulty staying on the breast
- weight loss or challenges to gain weight
- restless, tiring and unsettled feeds
- noisy or clicking sounds during the feed
- dribbling of milk during feeds
- too much wind during or after feeds

Challenges for the mother breastfeeding a baby with a tongue-tie may include:

- distorted nipple shape after a breastfeed
- bleeding, damaged or ulcerated nipples resulting in nipple pain
- baby does not feed enough, resulting in [breast fullness \(engorgement\)](#) or [mastitis](#)

[Concern about your breast milk supply](#)


Lactation support

You will need good lactation support if your baby has tongue-tie. Techniques like improved [positioning and attachment](#) can help with feeding challenges. If this is successful, further treatment may not be necessary.

Midwife Susan O'Driscoll talks about overcoming breastfeeding challenges

Your baby's tongue-tie should be assessed as part of lactation support.

[Find an international board certified consultant \(IBCLC\) - alcireland.ie](#)

 [Ask our breastfeeding expert](#)

If you do not have access to a lactation consultant, you can also get help from your:

- infant feeding specialist
- midwife
- public health nurse (PHN)
- GP
- neonatologist
- paediatrician

Treatment

Some babies may need a frenotomy. This is where the frenulum causing the tongue-tie is released in a minor operation. In some cases, you may be charged for this operation.

A trained healthcare professional performs the frenotomy procedure. It's usually done without an anaesthetic, but a local anaesthetic is sometimes used with older babies.

Your baby will be wrapped in a blanket and supported at the shoulders to stabilise the head.

The tongue-tie is then released. There should be little or no blood loss. You may be able to continue breastfeeding immediately.

Follow-up and support

Both you and your baby should have a check-up after the procedure. Skilled breastfeeding information and support is essential following a frenotomy.

There is a wide range of breastfeeding support available in Ireland.

Breastfeeding support groups are run by:

- lactation consultants
- public health nurses
- [La Leche league leaders](#)
- [Cuidiu breastfeeding counsellors](#)

[Friends of Breastfeeding](#) also provide social support at their Mum2Mum groups.

Breastfeeding difficulties

If you are having difficulties with breastfeeding, get support from an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

[What a International Board Certified Lactation Consultant is - alcireland.ie](#)

[Find an IBC Lactation Consultant near you - alcireland.ie](#)



Ask our breastfeeding experts

[Get personal advice from our lactation consultants](#)

Page last reviewed: 25 May 2022

Next review due: 25 May 2025

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019 under Grant Agreement Number 123.

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Freephone: [1800 700 700](tel:1800700700)

From outside Ireland: [00 353 1 240 8787](tel:0035312408787)

[HSE Facebook](#)

[HSE Instagram](#)

[HSE TikTok](#)

[HSE YouTube](#)

[HSE LinkedIn](#)

[HSE X \(Twitter\)](#)

[Complaints and feedback](#)

[Emergencies](#)

[Cookie settings](#)

[Cookie statement](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy statement](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

© Health Service Executive