

# Patient Information



Milton Keynes  
University Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Women's and  
Children's Health**

**Tongue Tie Division to  
Improve Breastfeeding**

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## What is a Tongue Tie?



A tongue tie is a tight or short membrane under the tongue (frenulum). The tongue tip may be blunt, forked, or have a heart shaped appearance and may not be able to protrude beyond the lower gum. The membrane may be attached at the tongue tip, or further back.

## Possible Signs of Problems Due to Tongue Tie

Tongue-tie can cause problems with breastfeeding effectively, due to a poor latch, which leads to sore, damaged, nipples. A clear sign of a poor latch is a pinched 'lipstick' shaped nipple when baby releases the breast. This can lead to inefficient milk transfer leading to reduction in supply. Babies may have a small gape and poor suckling function. They may seem restless while feeding, have difficulty staying latched and feed frequently or for a long time. The baby may end the feed early due to exhaustion. Clicking noises or dribbling are also indicators along with colic.

## Assessment

A tongue tie can vary from mild to severe and assessment of feeding will be carried out and support given before a referral for division is made. The neonatal examination must have taken place first and if your baby is under the care of the Paediatric team, there will be a team discussion to agree on the most appropriate treatment option as division may not be appropriate.

## Treatment

Your baby will be swaddled and supported at the head and shoulders during the procedure. The tongue tie division is performed using a pair of sharp, blunt ended scissors to gently release the membrane (Frenulum). There is little, if any, pain or bleeding. You will be encouraged to breastfeed your baby straight after the treatment.

## Aftercare

There is no need for any kind of wound management. You will be encouraged to exclusively breastfeed and avoid dummies, teats

etc. Problems are extremely rare but could include some pain or some bleeding and rarely ulceration which may lead to scarring.

## **Tongue tie can be corrected in Milton Keynes University Hospital**

We are able to offer this service to babies aged 6 weeks or under, where the intention is to breastfeed and tongue tie division is clinically indicated. This procedure can be performed by a trained midwife. NICE guidance does not support the division of tongue ties where a baby is intended to be formula fed, however if the baby is having feeding difficulties or weight issues these case will be considered.

### **Referral Pathway**

- Direct referral from a hospital midwife or paediatrician.
- Direct referral from your community midwife, maternity support worker, health visitor or GP.

<http://www.unicef.org.uk/BabyFriendly/Parents/Problems/Tongue-Tie/Locations-where-tongue-tie-can-be-divided/>

### **Further Information**

You have the right to be fully informed and to share in decision making about the treatment you receive.

The NICE website ([www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)) has further information about NICE, the Interventional Procedures Programme and the full guidance on division of tongue-tie. The evidence that NICE considered and a report called 'Breastfeeding for longer – what works?' are also available from the NICE website.

If you have access to the internet, you can find more information on breastfeeding on the NHS Choices website or:

- **National Breastfeeding Helpline** 0300 100 0212
- **NCT Breastfeeding Helpline** 0300 330 0771
- **La Leche League Helpline** 0845 120 2918
- **Association of Breastfeeding Mothers** 08444 122 949

This information has been produced by Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and is for general information only. Please speak to your midwife, health visitor or doctor for specific advice concerning your baby.

## References

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
- Division of Ankyloglossia [tongue-tie] for Breastfeeding. December 2005.
- [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)
- [www.babyfriendly.org.uk](http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk)

**We ask information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.**

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