



Care Plan for Breastfeeding a Baby with Restricted Frenulum of Tongue and/or Lip

A baby may have difficulty breastfeeding due to having a restricted, or tight, frenulum under his tongue and/or under the upper lip. A frenulum is a band of connective tissue that can be found in several places in the mouth. There is a frenulum that attaches the tongue to the floor of the mouth. There is also a frenulum that attaches the upper lip to the upper gum. In most people, including babies, these bands of tissue do not interfere with feeding or speech production. In a few babies, when these bands of tissue are tight, it causes breastfeeding problems. It might also make breastfeeding painful for you.

Care Plan Goals:

- Identify possible causes of baby's breastfeeding difficulty and mother's discomfort
- Provide techniques to assist with more effective breastfeeding
- Provide plan to assist baby with weight gain and maintain mother's milk production
- Refer to appropriate health care provider for additional assessment and treatment when necessary

Signs of a Baby with a Restricted Frenulum of Tongue

- Tip of baby's tongue appears notched or heart-shaped when he cries or sticks tongue out
- In some babies, the tongue appears flat and can't be lifted
- Baby has trouble sticking his tongue out over his lower gum and bottom lip
- Baby has trouble opening his mouth widely to latch onto breast deeply
- Baby has trouble staying on the breast—he attaches but slips off frequently while feeding
- You may hear clicking sounds during breastfeeding
- Baby acts fussy and wants to eat frequently (more than every 2 hours)
- Feedings regularly lasting more than 45 minutes
- Baby does not have enough wet or dirty diapers in 24 hours or has poor weight gain

Signs of a Baby with a Restricted Frenulum of Upper Lip

- Baby has trouble opening his mouth widely to latch onto the breast deeply
- Baby's upper lip curls under and can't flange onto your breast
- Baby's upper lip has one or more calluses

How a Restricted Frenulum of the Tongue or Upper Lip May Affect Mother

- Nipple or breast pain during or after breastfeeding
- Feels as if baby is biting or pinching your nipple during feedings
- Nipple is creased or flattened on the underside when it comes out of baby's mouth
- Crack across the surface of your nipple or around the base

How a Restricted Frenulum of the Tongue or Upper Lip May Affect Mother

If you are concerned that your baby may have some of these signs, talk with the lactation consultant and your baby's health care provider. When a restricted frenulum is suspected, a referral is made to a doctor or dentist who is specially trained in treating these problems. The specialist may perform a frenotomy. This is a simple procedure that frees the band of tissue so that the tongue and/or lip can move freely for feeding and speech. Stretching exercises are often provided to keep the tongue and lip moving freely.

After frenotomy, a baby may need time to learn to breastfeed more effectively. It is important that you follow up with a lactation consultant to make certain that your baby is breastfeeding effectively and that you are not in pain. For more information, call the TriHealth Breastfeeding Helpline (513 862 7867) to speak with a lactation consultant who is experienced with this problem.