

ANKYLOGLOSSIA (TONGUE-TIE) – DIVISION FOR BREASTFEEDING • 1/1

Based on NICE IPG 149

INTRODUCTION

- Breastfeeding is a complex interaction between mother and baby. Many factors can affect the ability to breastfeed
- Skilled breastfeeding support is an integral part of the management of breastfeeding difficulties
- Current evidence suggests that there are no major safety concerns about division of tongue-tie, and limited evidence suggests that it can improve breastfeeding

DEFINITION

- A congenital anomaly of variable severity characterised by an abnormally short lingual frenulum, which may restrict movement of the tongue. In severe cases the tongue is joined to the bottom of the mouth

INDICATIONS

- Many tongue-ties are asymptomatic and cause no problem
- Breastfeeding difficulties; conservative management includes breastfeeding advice
- [enhanced breastfeeding support may reduce the need for frenotomy](#)
- Assess carefully to determine if frenulum is interfering with feeding, and if division is appropriate
- Symptoms may include:
 - difficulties with latching on
 - sore nipples
 - poor weight gain
- Cochrane review 2017, [updated 2020](#)
- frenotomy reduces breastfeeding mothers' nipple pain in the short-term
- no consistent positive effect on [baby](#) breastfeeding
- researchers reported no serious complications, but total number of [babies](#) studied was small

PROCEDURE

- Division to be performed by properly trained registered healthcare professional only
- Division in early infancy is usually performed without anaesthetic (although local anaesthetic is sometimes used)
- Little or no blood loss
- Feeding may be resumed immediately

COMPLICATIONS OF PROCEDURE

- Infrequent, but may include:
 - bleeding
 - infection
 - ulceration
 - pain
 - damage to tongue and surrounding area
 - recurrence of tongue-tie

KEY RESULTS

- In a [baby](#) with tongue-tie and feeding difficulties, surgical release of the tongue-tie does not consistently improve [baby's](#) feeding but is likely to improve maternal nipple pain
- further research required to clarify and confirm this effect