

Consumer Handout | Canberra Health Services

Breastfeeding and your baby: Tongue Tie

What is a Tongue Tie (TT)

A TT happens when the thin piece of tissue, called a frenulum, joins the underside of the tongue to the lower gum and is too tight. This can limit the baby's tongue movement, and your baby may have trouble using their tongue during breastfeeding.

There are different types of TT



100% tongue tie



50% tongue tie

Did you know? Between 4-11% babies are born with a tongue tie.

Does a TT affect my baby's breastfeeding?

It is important to note that not all babies with a TT have difficulty breastfeeding.

A TT that affects your baby's feeding can present in the following ways:

- your baby may have difficulty latching to your breast, have trouble staying on the breast and comes "on and off"
- loses suction while feeding
- quickly becomes tired when feeding
- poor weight gain

You may experience:

- nipple pain
- cracked, sore and bleeding nipples
- a misshapen, flat or ridged nipple after breastfeeding
- engorgement – an uncomfortable buildup of milk in your breast tissue causing firm and swollen breasts
- mastitis – inflamed breast tissue, which may recur when breastmilk is not removed
- a low milk supply

What do I do if I think my baby has a TT?

If you are worried your baby has a TT you can contact:

- your Midwife
- Maternal Child and Family Health (MACH) nurse/midwife
- an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)
- your GP

Your health professional will:

- review your baby in hospital or once discharged by MACH, lactation consultant, or a GP
- watch how your baby feeds
- take a detailed history of your birth and feeding experience
- examine your baby, including their mouth
- check for any medical reasons that might be affecting feeding

Next steps?

- A feeding plan will be put in place, and your health professional will continue to provide ongoing support for you and your baby's feeding needs.
- Some babies with a TT might benefit from a simple procedure to release the TT and should be referred to a specialist.
- TT release (often called a 'snip') is done by an experienced clinician. They gently lift your baby's tongue with their fingers to expose the TT, then use sharp sterile scissors to snip it.
- A few drops of blood can be normal following the snip, it is important that your baby has had Vitamin K at birth and there are no bleeding problems in your family.
- Your baby can breastfeed straight after, which can soothe them and supports healing.
- Complications are rare, and most babies recover quickly.

Where can I get support?

A TT assessment and snip may be possible before leaving hospital or when on Midcall or Continuity of Care at:

- The Canberra Hospital (TCH)
- North Canberra Hospital (NCH)

Speak to your midwife to check if your baby is eligible or if you have any concerns. You will need to give consent for your baby before a TT snip.

The Neonatal TT clinic at TCH is for babies who:

- were born in the ACT
- are under the care of Midcall or Continuity of Care at TCH/ NCH
- are accessing MACH services and are **up to 28 days** of age at time of appointment

Service is free for Medicare card holders.



Paediatric TT Outpatient Clinic

Referral to a Paediatric surgeon via GP if your baby is over 28 days of age. To book an appointment phone 5124 7550

General Practitioner (GP) services

On request a list of GPs can be provided.

Maternal Child and Family Health (MACH)

One on one feeding assessment is offered at the dedicated Breastfeeding Support Clinics. Call the Early Parenting Support Line on **(02) 5124 1775** to book an appointment.

Other support services

Australian Breastfeeding Association

Operates a 24-hour help line run by trained volunteer breastfeeding counsellors

Phone: 1800 686 268

Web: www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Lactation Consultants Australia New Zealand

You can also use this service to find an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC)

Web: www.lcanz.org/

Canberra Health Service

<https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au> (search breastfeeding)

Healthdirect

Phone: 1800 022 222

Web: [Trusted Health Advice | healthdirect](#)



Acknowledgement of Country

Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this region.



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