



Does My Baby Have Tethered Oral Tissue (TOTs)?

The term ‘tethered oral tissue’ (TOTs) refers to when a frenulum is tight/restricted and affects the mobility of the tongue, upper lip, or cheeks. TOTs are more commonly known as tongue ties, lip ties, or buccal ties. Frenula come in all shapes and sizes. Some are short and thick and some are long and thin. Some visually-obvious frenula do not cause a restriction in oral motor function, while some less-obvious frenula can wreak havoc on the way a tongue or lip move and function. This is why it is important to always have your baby assessed by a skilled IBCLC, to extend beyond just the visual assessment and continue into how range of motion might be impacted.

Here are some common symptoms of tethered oral tissue (TOTs):

Symptoms for Baby	Symptoms for breastfeeding parent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Shallow latch on breast and/or bottle● Poor milk transfer● Feedings seem to take forever● Choking/coughing while feeding● Loses latch on breast or bottle often● Slow weight gain● Reflux symptoms● Spits up often● Takes in air while feeding● Fussy baby● Needs to feed with nipple shield	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sore/cracked nipples● Hurts while breastfeeding● Nipples are compressed/flattened when baby unlatches● Plugged ducts/mastitis/milk blisters● Breasts don't feel empty after baby feeds● Low milk supply



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What to do if you suspect your baby has tethered oral tissue (TOTs):

- Make an appointment with [SDBFC](#) or another [International Board Certified Lactation Consultant \(IBCLC\)](#)
- Have the IBCLC conduct a full oral and feeding assessment - this includes checking the mobility and function of the tongue/lip/cheeks with a gloved hand, as well as while breastfeeding
- Confirm that the symptoms you/baby are experiencing cannot be corrected with proper position/latching techniques, therefore the oral tissue is tethered (tight/restricted)
- If tethered oral tissue is identified, contact a [preferred provider](#) who specializes in the diagnosis and possible release of the tightened frenula.
- Following the frenula release(s), use [post-frenotomy exercises](#) for at least 4 weeks to prevent reattachment and follow up with your IBCLC for continued lactation support

Further information about tethered oral tissue (TOTs):

[Latch: a Handbook for Breastfeeding with Confidence at Every Stage](#) by Robin Kaplan, IBCLC

[Dr. Ghaheri's website](#)

[SOS for TOTs](#) by Lawrence Kotlow, DDS

[Tongue-Tied](#) by Richard Baxter, DMD, MS

[Kellymom: Breastfeeding a Baby with a Tongue Tie or Lip Tie \(Resources\)](#)