

Dr. Kaplan's Tongue Tie Post-Revision Exercises also known as Playtime or Physiotherapy

By Ada Counsman on Thursday, October 30, 2014 at 9:51pm

After a tongue tie release (revision) you **must also provide tongue strengthening exercises**. Even though the new release and stretching which you were taught to do will insure the best possible freedom for mobility, there may still be a problem of muscle coordination and strength.

Approximately 3 months prior to birth, your infant was sucking and using his/her tongue in utero. So after birth there was already 3 months of developmentally restricted tongue muscle movement. Therefore we need to **train the tongue to move and exercise** to allow for the proper 3-dimensional movement of the tongue muscles. We will encourage this as **PLAYTIME**. **4 times a day for 6 weeks**, you will find a time to do the following exercises to encourage your baby to **extend** and **point** his/her tongue, create a central **groove** of the tongue to encourage side grasping or control of your nipple and also right and left **lateral movement** which was inhibited by the restrictive tongue tie.

There are many types of exercises that your IBCLC can teach you. I have found the following to be the easiest for my patients to perform. **REMEMBER THIS IS CONSIDERED PLAY TIME EXERCISES** performed at a *different time than the stretching exercises* (which are done *4 times a day for 2 weeks*).

Tongue Pointing (Extension): Place finger pad on the bottom lip and gently tap and stroke it down towards the lower jaw. This will encourage the tongue to extend out of the mouth and point. This should be done several times a day to encourage the extension muscles of the tongue to strengthen. (This is an inborn infant reflex that becomes habit by 4-6 months of age BUT is impeded when there is a tongue tie).

Side to Side Motion: Place your finger pad on the top surface of the front gum area of the lower jaw and gently slide your finger tip from the middle (where the front bottom teeth will eventually be) to the right back molar area then slowly back to the starting point (repeat this side at least 3 times and then slide to the left side and repeat for 3 strokes). This will encourage the tongue to move laterally as the tongue freedom improves and strengthens as you continue this exercise. (This also is a natural tongue reflex that becomes a habit between ages 6-9 months BUT is hindered when there is a tongue tie).

Tongue Grooving: This will stimulate the sides of the tongue to contract and rise up to form a central groove to help latch onto the nipple and allow for a path for the breast milk to flow towards the back of the throat for swallowing. This is accomplished by placing your finger with your finger pad towards the roof of the mouth and allowing your baby to suck on your finger. You can encourage strength by playing a gentle tug-of-war with your finger and the sucking of the tongue. (This will strengthen over time).

Flange Exercise: Using the same position as above, leave your finger in place (up to the first knuckle) at the roof of the mouth right behind where the front teeth will be. As your baby sucks, gently free the curled under lip with your other free hand and curl the lip up and out with your finger pad.