

# Frenectomy



Clarence Street  
DENTAL Group

A frenectomy is a surgical procedure to free the tissue that is attached to the tongue or lips otherwise known as "tongue tied" or "lip tied". It is quite common, especially for children.

A frenectomy is performed to cut or modify the soft tissue that connects the frenum to the lips or gums. The frenum is two small bands of tissue that are located in and around the teeth and gums. For infants, it can interfere with breastfeeding and the child's ability to swallow if it is too short or too tight. As a child grows, it can affect their speech development. A frenectomy is typically done during the infant stage of life.

As an adult, the oral cavity changes significantly. If your speech develops normally and you have no problems eating and drinking, you may not need to treat a tongue tie or lip tie as an adult. However, a frenum could pull the gums away from the lower front teeth, leading to gum recession. It may also restrict your tongue's mobility or your ability to move your lips. It is often a simple, quick procedure that can be completed in the dental office.

There are 2 main types of frenectomies: Labial and Lingual

## Labial Frenectomy:

In the upper arch, the tissue that connects the gums above your front teeth to the top lip is called the labial frenum. If it is abnormally wide or long, it may connect through to the gum tissue between the teeth and extend to the front portion of the roof of the mouth. When the upper frenum is too wide or long, it can create a space between the two front teeth. There is the chance that the frenum may be shorter than average and in that case, may cause difficulty in speech development. This could also pose a problem with dental development and make it hard to clean the gums and front teeth. This is known as a type of lip adhesion.

This may require a surgical procedure performed by a general dentist, oral surgeon, or other specialist. A labial frenectomy can give the upper lip more mobility. If the patient is seeing an orthodontist and the goal is to close the space between the two front teeth, then a consultation with the orthodontist as to when the surgery should take place is a good idea.

### Labial Frenectomy (Lip tie)



Before



After

## Lingual Frenectomy:

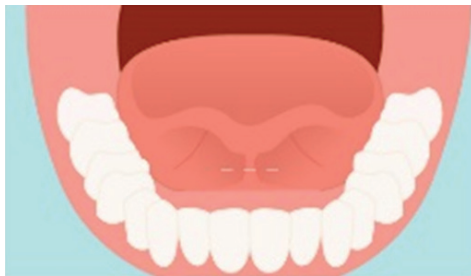
The lingual frenum is located between the base of the tongue and the floor of the mouth. It connects your tongue to your mouth. If you touch your tongue to the roof of your mouth, you can probably feel the lingual frenum stretching underneath your tongue. The length of the frenum varies from person to person. If the frenum restricts the movement of the tongue, it is called "tongue tied" or "ankyloglossia". This condition occurs in nearly 5% of infants, primarily boys. Being tongue tied, infants may struggle to breastfeed. This can



cause their weight gain to be slower or even cause weight loss. If you are breastfeeding, you may experience more pain during feeding. This can also affect the speech of your child as they develop.

A surgical procedure called a frenectomy may be performed. It is a quick procedure and allows the tongue to have a greater range of motion. A frenectomy can be performed by a general dentist, an oral surgeon, or another specialist. The goal is to free the tongue and allow proper speech, swallowing, and movement.

## Lingual Frenectomy (Tongue tie)



Before



After

### How is a frenectomy performed?

In most cases, the oral frenectomy procedure is fairly straightforward using these general steps:

1. Your doctor may apply a topical anaesthetic to the area to numb any pain.
2. Your doctor will quickly snip the frenum using a scalpel, surgical scissors, or a cauterizing instrument.
3. If the lip tie is severe or more complicated, it may require a few stitches to close the incision.
4. The entire procedure will likely take 15 minutes or less from start to finish.

Some doctors prefer to perform a laser frenectomy which is very similar to a traditional oral frenectomy. The only difference is that the procedure uses a laser, which minimizes the risk of infection and blood loss. Releasing a lip tie or tongue tie carries a very small risk of infection or complications. It should start healing right away.

### What is the recovery like?

Recovery after an oral frenectomy is generally straightforward. You'll need to keep the area clean, which is simple enough for infant patients. For adults, you may need to limit the foods you eat for the first few days. Food trapped in the affected area could raise your risk for infection.

In most cases, there is very little post-operative pain and swelling. Many patients hardly notice the effects of the surgery. Some patients consider the procedure to be like having a "pizza burn" in and around the mouth. Your doctor may prescribe oral antibiotics to prevent infections or complications. Within a day or two, the area should begin to heal. After a week, you'll see that the area has begun to scar over. You should be able to resume all of your normal activities. You will likely be booked for a post op check within a couple weeks of the surgery.