

How a Tongue or Lip Tie May Be Having a Negative Effect on Your Breastfeeding Relationship

Tongue and lip ties are incredibly common, and many babies go undiagnosed for months and sometimes even years. However, that little piece of extra skin can wreak havoc on your breastfeeding relationship. Here are some common issues that can be a sign that you should have your baby checked for a tie.

1. Sore or cracked nipples

Because a baby with a tongue or lip tie can't get a proper latch, the nipple experiences more irritation. You may find that your nipples are sore and cracked or even bleeding. While breastfeeding is not always comfortable, it definitely should not cause pain or bleeding. If it does, it's important to see a lactation consultant who can watch your baby nurse and check the latch in progress.

2. Recurrent plugged ducts or mastitis

A tongue or lip tie can cause your baby to pop on and off the breast a lot or go for short frequent nursing sessions. This keeps the breast from getting emptied properly, which can lead to issues such as plugged ducts or mastitis. While most breastfeeding women will experience plugged ducts at some point, recurring plugs are an indicator of a more serious underlying issue. Mastitis can also be very serious and should be evaluated and treated by a doctor immediately.

3. Higher than normal levels of sleep deprivation

Having a baby automatically means less sleep for most parents, but there's a difference between normal sleep disturbances and those that come with a baby who has a tongue or lip tie. In the latter case, the baby will often be up very frequently at night because the latch issues mean they need to eat more often to compensate for not being able to get a full meal at one time. If your baby doesn't seem to be sleeping longer stretches as they get older, it's a good idea to get things checked out.

4. Depression, anxiety and poor mental health

Post-partum depression is real, and while we've made great strides in making it a more public subject in the last couple of decades, that doesn't make it any easier to deal with. Sleep deprivation and stress and anxiety surrounding a difficult breastfeeding relationship can take a real toll on your mental health. If you're experiencing depression, anxiety or just feel like something's not right, it's important for both you and your baby to get checked out by a doctor who can see if there's any underlying issue that may be making things harder.

While none of these issues are fun to deal with, the good news is that once your baby is diagnosed with a tongue or lip tie, you're usually just a quick out-patient procedure from moving forward. It may take a little bit for you to rebuild the breastfeeding relationship — particularly if you've been struggling for a while before the diagnosis — but many women find that things fall together much easier once the tie is dealt with.