



RECOMMENDED POST FRENECTOMY EXERCISES

Importance of Exercises: These exercises can be the most challenging for parents and children, however they are the most important. We believe these exercises decrease the chance of reattachment. Oftentimes children will overuse their jaw, lips and/or cheek muscles to compensate for decreased tongue function. After the tongue tie is released, the tongue and muscles of the mouth have to be re-trained to allow to assist with all the functions of the tongue including chewing, talking and swallowing. After the procedure, the child will have improved range of motion, but the strength and stability will have to be rebuilt. Exercises are done to re-train and strengthen the muscles on the jaw/tongue/cheek needed to achieve normal movement patterns.

When to Start the Exercises: Please start these exercises 6-8 hours after the procedure unless instructed to wait.

Frequency of Exercises: PLEASE do the exercises consistently, 6 times/day, for a total of minute to minute and half each session, until your two-week follow-up appointment.

After your follow up your provider may suggest decreasing the frequency of the exercises, but until instructed to do so, please continue the exercises as suggested above. Exercises will continue for up to another 4 weeks (**total of 6 weeks**) to decrease the chance of re-attachment and continue to help muscles of the mouth learn optimal patterns, strengthen and stabilize as needed. If you are working with an IBCLC or Speech Pathologist, they can guide you through the specific and unique needs of your child's oral-motor patterns.

Please continue the Pre Frenectomy Exercise after the Procedure also.

Tips Before Starting Post Frenectomy Exercises

- Start when your child is quiet and non-agitated. Talk them through the exercises. You can have them do the exercises on you for fun and to build more trust and familiarity with them. Using a mirror may provide a visual cue for some children and create an additional element of fun as well. We advise to try doing the stretches while your child is sitting up, like in a bouncer, swing or car seat. This can help with getting the tongue up easier
- If your child becomes distressed or upset, please respect their cues and stop the exercises. Make sure to provide comfort and console them. Building trust with your child is very important to avoid oral aversion before or after the procedure! We understand that toddlers and older children can make this process more challenging. Just do your best!
- The best behavioral technique that works for toddlers is that they are easily distractible. A lot of parents are able to play with the child and get them distracted while performing the exercises. An example would Frenectomy be putting peanut butter/jelly/nutella on the edges of the lips and asking them to try to lick it off by moving their tongue all around. The exercises can be done in a very playful manner as well. You could ask the child to be asked to imitate the parents when moving the tongue around.
- Make sure that the child has adequate pain control on board, because if the exercises are hurting a lot it will be more difficult for parents to distract the child. For pain management, you can try giving your child colder foods like ice cream or a popsicle. This may incentivize them to cooperate and provide pain relief at the same time.



- Some parents prefer doing these exercises while their child is in a deep sleep. They find in most cases their child does not wake at all and if they did, they were able to return to sleep immediately. With this method, the child may not remember having stretches done at all (this may not work for all children).
- You do not need to touch the wound during the exercises, as all the stretching is done **around** by pushing around the wound. However, if you do touch the wound, it is completely okay and does not increase the chances of infection. In the past there was some suggestion that parents could use coconut oil to massage over the wound, but we have not found it useful and now we do not recommend doing this anymore.
- **We recommend you do what works best for your child's routine.**

How to perform the exercises: Follow the directions below while keeping in mind that the goal of these exercises is to **keep the tissue that is healing open and separate** in order to prevent reattachment. We want this area to heal without the surrounding tissue joining back together. These exercises do not need to be forceful; they should be gentle but firm.

1. Follow the Finger

You can start with the gentle facial massages and stimulating their philtrum to open their mouth. Once you are allowed inside their mouth start with **"Follow the Finger"**. Doing these first helps child become familiar with your fingers in their mouth (again) and exercises lateralization of the tongue (moving it from left to right).

2. Cheek Stretches

Please follow the pre-frenotomy description of how to complete these. Gentle cheek stretches and compression provides sensory stimulation to the sides of the tongue as it moves from cheek to cheek. This can eventually help bring the tongue forward in the mouth and assist with a latch for feeding.

3. Lifting the Tongue

This exercise elevates the tongue toward the roof of the mouth to stretch the frenectomy site which keeps the wound open as it is healing and lessens the risk of re-attachment.

Place the pads of your pointer or small fingers on each side of the wound. Use the left and right points of the diamond shape as a guide. Using a motion that lifts the tongue upward toward the roof of the mouth, sweep your fingers up and down swiftly and firmly for 4 or 5 strokes. (This takes about 5 seconds.) This can also be done using just finger at one time.

If child becomes upset, return to "Follow the Finger" game or allow the child to suck on your finger. When child is calm, proceed to the next exercise.

4. Deeper Tongue lift:

For tight tongues, it is helpful to push your finger to go **deeper on the sides of the tongue for the lift**. This may cause some gagging and choking. Make sure that you do it only to the extent that does not cause choking. This helps the tongue to loosen up and 'come to a point'.

5. Push Back the Tongue:

This exercise stretches the tongue toward the roof of the mouth, further improving its ability to lift by stretching along the midline.

Place the pad of your pointer or small finger up above the top point of the wound on the underside of the tongue. Firmly push back on the tongue 3-4 times.

6. Strengthening the Jaw:

Please follow the pre-frenectomy description of how to complete these. Often, when the tongue tie is released and there is increased tongue movement, we need to work on improving jaw strength and stability. Jaw stability is the foundation, on which tongue function depends.

Here are some alternative ways to increase tongue movement, especially if your child is more averse to the manual lifting and pushing back exercises:

- Put a dab of peanut butter or something with a similar texture (*please be mindful of any food allergies*) on the alveolar ridge (*gum line immediately behind the teeth*) and try sweeping it off with the tongue. You can help increase tongue elevation by helping to hold the jaw stable while the mouth is open and tongue is sweeping peanut butter.
- Put a piece of cheerio or meltable puff on the tip of the tongue. Have the child elevate the tongue to make contact with the palate. Hold the piece of cheerio in place or mash it to dissolve. Please be mindful of your child's age and skill while using this exercise, to avoid choke risks.
If you are concerned for choke risk, meltable puffs may be a safer option since they dissolve easily
- Write your child's name or draw something they like on a plate, with easy cheese/whipped cream/jelly etc., and have them lick it off.
- Using a vibrating toothbrush or Z-vibe to stimulate the roof of the mouth and have the tongue follow the vibration.

Other recommendations that will continue to promote optimal and healthy growth of your child's mouth, as well as improve function of the tongue, lips, jaw and cheeks include:

Bottles:

- Slower flow nipples allow for a more coordinated suck-swallow-breathe sequence. This not only provides a safe feeding process, but it also allows the child to coordinate tongue movement efficiently and transfer the liquid from front to back for a timely swallow trigger. When liquid flows at an extremely fast rate, children will do everything in their power to protect their airway. This may include losing suction, losing a latch, compressing the nipple to decrease flow, etc.
- While the market is flooded with brands, shapes and sizes that claim they are child friendly and/or breastfeeding friendly, it is imperative to find the bottle nipple that provides the best latch and suction for your child. We typically have seen that bottle nipples with a longer teat that can go deeper into the mouth, and over the tongue allow for increased suction and tongue function. Nipples with shorter teats, or too wide of a base may result in chomping or more compression of the base by the lips and jaws, versus use of the tongue to cup, groove and extract milk in a wave-like motion.
- Bottles with flat nipples (often marketed as orthodontic nipples) should be avoided if possible as these do not promote appropriate tongue function.

While you may have tried many of the recommended bottle systems prior to a tongue tie/lip tie release, and decided it wasn't the best option for your child, we encourage you trial them again after the procedure since tongue function and function of the overall mouth may have changed.

Pacifiers:

- Similar to the bottle recommendations, it is recommended that if you are using a pacifier, to please try ones with longer more cylindrical teats, versus flat ones.
- Cylindrical shaped pacifiers can be used to complete some of the post release exercises, as well as help promote tongue cupping and suction.
- While pacifiers are a great way to help a child soothe, please be mindful of minimizing the time pacifiers are in the mouth. Anytime a pacifier is in a child's mouth, this takes away from an opportunity for the tongue to make contact with the palate (roof of the mouth) and work on suction, palate shaping, etc. It also takes away from the child's opportunity to develop their speech, and self-calming strategies. Prolonged pacifier use may also have dental implications.

Sippy Cups:

- Please avoid spout sippy cups or straw cups that require biting versus sucking to pull the liquid.
- Spouted cups result in a forward-backward tongue motion similar to a child's suckle. Prolonging this pattern for longer than developmentally appropriate, may result in further delays in speech and feeding skill development.
- It is more beneficial to work on drinking from an open cup (you can use a medicine cup or puree jar while teaching cup drinking) or a regular straw, to promote appropriate oral function.



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Spoon Feeding:

- Choose a spoon that is flexible, and has a flat bowl. Deeper bowls make it difficult for children to close their lips and pull off the food.
- Present small bites versus large heaps. Please remember that this is a time of skill development of the lips, jaw and tongue, versus solely for nutrition.
- Try presenting foods to the sides (towards the cheeks) versus always going in the middle. Presenting foods to the cheeks allows the tongue to move from side to side and increase efficiency.

In summary:

Many parents overthink the exercises and get anxious and depressed. It is very important to know that the first couple of days are difficult with doing the exercises any way especially as your child cries with them, however this is short lived and soon the exercises become less painful (though are always annoying). The two things the exercises need to achieve are:

- **Stretching the wound**
- **Encouraging movement of the tongue.**

There may be other ways of achieving these two goals, and they are acceptable as long as you are achieving the above. There is not one way which is the gold standard for doing the exercises. We recommend the above protocol as we have done this for a long time with remarkable success.



Word/Speech Exercises

If your child has been struggling with speech issues or you want to get best functional results do these exercises with your child twice a day. If your child is working with a speech or feeding therapist, they may have different exercises they may have you do in place of this.

Start with Row 1 until you reach Row 12. Make sure they pronounce each word clearly. You can check mark the words your child is struggling with. This way you are able to pay attention to the words/sounds they are struggling with. The words that were checked you can also ask your child to say throughout the day.

Remember not to get frustrated if your child is unable to make a sound as they are relearning tongue function.

Row 1	Row 2	Row 3	Row 4	Row 5	Row 6
<input type="checkbox"/> Sit	<input type="checkbox"/> Scoop	<input type="checkbox"/> Snail	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweep	<input type="checkbox"/> Slow	<input type="checkbox"/> Bus
<input type="checkbox"/> Soup	<input type="checkbox"/> Scare	<input type="checkbox"/> Snack	<input type="checkbox"/> Swallow	<input type="checkbox"/> Sled	<input type="checkbox"/> Face
<input type="checkbox"/> Salt	<input type="checkbox"/> Scarf	<input type="checkbox"/> Snarl	<input type="checkbox"/> Swaddle	<input type="checkbox"/> Slacker	<input type="checkbox"/> Ice
<input type="checkbox"/> Seal	<input type="checkbox"/> Skirt	<input type="checkbox"/> Snatch	<input type="checkbox"/> Swam	<input type="checkbox"/> Slam	<input type="checkbox"/> Grass
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick	<input type="checkbox"/> Scout	<input type="checkbox"/> Snoop	<input type="checkbox"/> Swap	<input type="checkbox"/> Slab	<input type="checkbox"/> Horse
<input type="checkbox"/> Sing	<input type="checkbox"/> Scale	<input type="checkbox"/> Snot	<input type="checkbox"/> Swarm	<input type="checkbox"/> Slave	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Sun	<input type="checkbox"/> Skinny	<input type="checkbox"/> Sneak	<input type="checkbox"/> Swear	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleigh	<input type="checkbox"/> Address
<input type="checkbox"/> Save	<input type="checkbox"/> Scar	<input type="checkbox"/> Snip	<input type="checkbox"/> Swat	<input type="checkbox"/> Slick	<input type="checkbox"/> Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Seed	<input type="checkbox"/> Score	<input type="checkbox"/> Snag	<input type="checkbox"/> Sway	<input type="checkbox"/> Slit	<input type="checkbox"/> Purse
<input type="checkbox"/> Seat	<input type="checkbox"/> Skill	<input type="checkbox"/> Snob	<input type="checkbox"/> Swell	<input type="checkbox"/> Slim	<input type="checkbox"/> Glass
<input type="checkbox"/> City	<input type="checkbox"/> Skip	<input type="checkbox"/> Snuggle	<input type="checkbox"/> Swept	<input type="checkbox"/> Sliver	<input type="checkbox"/> Pass
<input type="checkbox"/> Said	<input type="checkbox"/> Skull	<input type="checkbox"/> Snooze	<input type="checkbox"/> Swipe	<input type="checkbox"/> Sludge	<input type="checkbox"/> Voice
<input type="checkbox"/> Sad	<input type="checkbox"/> Skunk	<input type="checkbox"/> Sniffle	<input type="checkbox"/> Switch	<input type="checkbox"/> Slug	<input type="checkbox"/> Nice
<input type="checkbox"/> Sour	<input type="checkbox"/> Scab	<input type="checkbox"/> Snoop	<input type="checkbox"/> Sword	<input type="checkbox"/> Slant	<input type="checkbox"/> Lips
<input type="checkbox"/> Sign	<input type="checkbox"/> Skim	<input type="checkbox"/> Snout	<input type="checkbox"/> Swollen	<input type="checkbox"/> Slob	<input type="checkbox"/> Class
<input type="checkbox"/> Sand	<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Snorkel	<input type="checkbox"/> Swamp	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleeve	<input type="checkbox"/> Dress
<input type="checkbox"/> Soft	<input type="checkbox"/> Skin	<input type="checkbox"/> Snicker	<input type="checkbox"/> Swim	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Erase
<input type="checkbox"/> Seven	<input type="checkbox"/> Skate	<input type="checkbox"/> Snitch	<input type="checkbox"/> Swan	<input type="checkbox"/> Slip	<input type="checkbox"/> House
<input type="checkbox"/> Sink	<input type="checkbox"/> Ski	<input type="checkbox"/> Snowball	<input type="checkbox"/> Swing	<input type="checkbox"/> Slide	<input type="checkbox"/> Mouse
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe	<input type="checkbox"/> Sky	<input type="checkbox"/> Snort	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweater	<input type="checkbox"/> Slap	<input type="checkbox"/> Lettuce
<input type="checkbox"/> Sorry		<input type="checkbox"/> Snap	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweet		<input type="checkbox"/> Fence
<input type="checkbox"/> Soap		<input type="checkbox"/> Snake	<input type="checkbox"/> Sweat		<input type="checkbox"/> Miss
<input type="checkbox"/> Sock		<input type="checkbox"/> Sneeze			<input type="checkbox"/> Juice
<input type="checkbox"/> Sail		<input type="checkbox"/> Snore			

Row 7	Row 8	Row 9	Row 10	Row 11	Row 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Smell	<input type="checkbox"/> Spoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Stamp	<input type="checkbox"/> Sting	<input type="checkbox"/> Baseball	<input type="checkbox"/> Listen
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoke	<input type="checkbox"/> Space	<input type="checkbox"/> Step	<input type="checkbox"/> Store	<input type="checkbox"/> Dancer	<input type="checkbox"/> Glasses
<input type="checkbox"/> Smog	<input type="checkbox"/> Spy	<input type="checkbox"/> Stack	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage	<input type="checkbox"/> Gasoline	<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle
<input type="checkbox"/> Smear	<input type="checkbox"/> Spare	<input type="checkbox"/> Stand	<input type="checkbox"/> Steak	<input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> Dinosaur
<input type="checkbox"/> Smooth	<input type="checkbox"/> Sponge	<input type="checkbox"/> Stay	<input type="checkbox"/> Start	<input type="checkbox"/> Fossil	<input type="checkbox"/> Popsicle
<input type="checkbox"/> Smudge	<input type="checkbox"/> Sparkle	<input type="checkbox"/> Steal	<input type="checkbox"/> Stir	<input type="checkbox"/> Pencil	<input type="checkbox"/> Eraser
<input type="checkbox"/> Smug	<input type="checkbox"/> Spear	<input type="checkbox"/> Steer	<input type="checkbox"/> Storm	<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle	<input type="checkbox"/> Faucet
<input type="checkbox"/> Smock	<input type="checkbox"/> Spend	<input type="checkbox"/> Stitch	<input type="checkbox"/> Stuck	<input type="checkbox"/> Beside	<input type="checkbox"/> Messy
<input type="checkbox"/> Smooth	<input type="checkbox"/> Spin	<input type="checkbox"/> Still	<input type="checkbox"/> Sticker	<input type="checkbox"/> Racing	<input type="checkbox"/> Outside
<input type="checkbox"/> Smack	<input type="checkbox"/> Spine	<input type="checkbox"/> Steam	<input type="checkbox"/> Star	<input type="checkbox"/> Insect	<input type="checkbox"/> Passing
<input type="checkbox"/> Smite	<input type="checkbox"/> Spoon	<input type="checkbox"/> Stone	<input type="checkbox"/> Stairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Recipe	<input type="checkbox"/> Whistle
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoky	<input type="checkbox"/> Space	<input type="checkbox"/> Stop	<input type="checkbox"/> Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> Policeman
<input type="checkbox"/> Smother	<input type="checkbox"/> Spark	<input type="checkbox"/> Steam	<input type="checkbox"/> Student		
<input type="checkbox"/> Smuggle	<input type="checkbox"/> Speed	<input type="checkbox"/> State			
<input type="checkbox"/> Smart	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/> Stick			
<input type="checkbox"/> Smash	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech				
<input type="checkbox"/> Small	<input type="checkbox"/> Spice				
<input type="checkbox"/> Smile	<input type="checkbox"/> Spent				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Special				