

Frenulectomy

A frenectomy is the removal of a frenum in the mouth; a muscular attachment between two tissues. This procedure is recommended when the frenum is causing pain or impeding normal function.

There are two frena (frenum) in the mouth that can sometimes obstruct normal function. The two frena are:

- The lingual frenum; connects the tongue to the floor of the mouth.
- The maxillary labial frenum; connects the inside of your upper lip to your gums just above your upper two front teeth.

The **lingual frenum** connects the tongue to the floor of the mouth. Sometimes, the lingual frenum can run all the way to the tip of the tongue (“tongue-tied”).

A restrictive lingual frenum is common in young children. You may not notice if your child has a restrictive lingual frenum because children are able to accommodate well to a prominent lingual frenum and can eat and speak normally. If the attachment, connection of the tongue to the floor of the mouth, extends all the way to the tip of the tongue, then a frenectomy may be the only choice to give the child normal tongue function.

A lingual frenectomy is a simple procedure and involves numbing the tongue with an anesthetic. A small incision is then made which will free the tongue from the floor of the mouth. The incision then will be sewn up to allow the tissue to heal.

A lingual frenectomy should be considered if a child is having trouble eating, swallowing, or speaking.

The **maxillary labial frenum** is when the upper lip is attached to the gums just above the upper two front teeth. If you move your tongue up between your upper lip and your teeth, you will feel this thin band of muscle.

When a frenulectomy is performed on a toddler or older child, a mild anesthetic is typically used. The frenulum is then separated by laser or cauterizing tool. A few stitches may be required. The entire procedure only takes between 15-30 minutes.

Post-operation instructions

After the operation, it's essential to **keep the area clean** with gentle salt water mouth rinses for best recovery. If at all possible, the patient should carry out careful tooth brushing with a **fairly soft brush**, to remove plaque on the teeth without irritating the gums. Stitches may dissolve by themselves in time or may need to be removed by the dentist. It can take one to three weeks to achieve complete healing, so care is needed when eating, and very hard foods should be avoided.

Pain can be controlled with over-the-counter **pain killers** such as ibuprofen or other NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), and doesn't usually last for more than one or two days.