

Your child's tongue-tie surgery

This leaflet is about your child's tongue-tie and how we correct it. Tongue-tie is when the strip of skin connecting your child's tongue to the bottom of their mouth is shorter than usual. The leaflet explains what you should do before your child's procedure, on the day of the procedure and when you return home.

The information only refers to children and older babies having the procedure in our operating theatre. We have a separate leaflet that explains the procedure for younger babies who are under 3 months old.

Your child's condition and procedure

Why does my child need tongue-tie surgery?

Your child is having this procedure because they were born with a tongue-tie. The condition is also called ankyloglossia. This is the name given to a piece of skin between the underside of the tongue and the floor of the mouth. Your child's piece of skin is shorter or tighter than usual, which can restrict the movement of the tongue.

Most children with tongue-ties do not have any problems. However, in some children, tongue-ties can contribute to difficulties with:

- breastfeeding
- speech
- doing certain things like licking ice lollies

In these cases, the surgeon recommends a simple procedure to remove the tongue-tie.

Are there any other treatment options to this procedure?

Children with speech problems need speech therapy, regardless of whether they also have tongue-tie surgery. Breastfeeding support is the main treatment for breastfeeding difficulties.

Before your child's procedure

What needs to happen before my child's procedure?

We need to see your child at a pre-admission clinic. This clinic may take place face to face or online. We make sure that your child is ready for an anaesthetic, which is a medicine to make them sleep during the procedure, and surgery. After the pre-admission clinic, our admissions team contacts you by letter, text message or phone. We offer you a date for your child's procedure.

Your child should not eat for 6 hours before the procedure. They can drink water until they arrive at the Evelina London children's day surgery unit. We give you more guidance about this (fasting instructions).

Do I need to get pain medicine ready for my child?

Please make sure that you have a week's supply of paracetamol (a painkiller) and ibuprofen (an anti-inflammatory medicine) at home before the procedure. We do not routinely give these medicines to take home for your child after day surgery.

You can buy paracetamol and ibuprofen from a pharmacy, supermarket or shop. Paracetamol for children may also be called Calpol®. Ibuprofen for children may also be called Calprofen® or Nurofen®. You need the type of medicine that you would give your child if they were unwell with a cold or ear ache. If your child cannot take paracetamol or ibuprofen for any reason, please speak to their healthcare team about other options.

On the day of the procedure

When you arrive at the children's day surgery unit

We give you a time to arrive at the Evelina London children's day surgery unit. It is important that you arrive at the correct time and have followed the fasting instructions for your child. If you arrive late or have not followed the fasting instructions, we may not be able to do the procedure.

You and your child meet the surgical and anaesthetic teams on the admissions ward before the procedure. We confirm that you have given your permission (consent) for the procedure. You can ask us any questions that you may have.

During the procedure

We give your child a general anaesthetic. This is a medicine that makes your child sleep and stops them feeling any pain during the procedure. You can stay with your child until they are asleep. Please see our separate leaflet called "Your child's general anaesthetic" for details.

We can treat your child's tongue-tie with a quick procedure called tongue-tie division. When your child is asleep, the surgeon cuts the skin of the tongue-tie to release it using a sterile pair of scissors. This allows the tongue to move more.

After the procedure, your child will be able to do things like stick out their tongue. As breastfeeding and speech are more complex processes, there is no guarantee that the procedure will improve them. However, it may be helpful.

Are there any risks to my child's procedure?

Every procedure has some risks of complications. To reduce these risks, we make sure that your child is well at the time of the procedure. We talk to you about the risks in the clinic and before the procedure when we confirm that we have your consent.

The specific risks of tongue-tie surgery are:

- a small amount of bleeding
- the tongue-tie growing back if your child has a tough scar after the procedure
- an infection that needs to be treated with antibiotics
- damage to the salivary ducts in the mouth that make spit or saliva (this is very rare)

After your child's procedure

How will my child look and feel after their procedure?

Your child may feel drowsy after their surgery and sleep for a while. They may be restless (agitated) and upset for up to an hour after waking up from the procedure. Some children may have pain and feel or be sick (vomit), but this is not common.

After the procedure, your child may have a small dressing on their hand. This covers the area where we have injected the general anaesthetic medicine.

Will my child be in pain after their procedure?

Your child usually has a local anaesthetic medicine during their procedure. This medicine gives them pain relief for several hours after they wake up.

When your child is awake, we may give them paracetamol, ibuprofen or both medicines. You can continue to give your child these medicines as needed when they are at home. The nurses can guide you when the next amount (dose) of pain medicine is due.

When can my child eat and drink or feed after their procedure?

Your child should be able to eat and drink as usual within 1 to 2 hours of the procedure.

Do we see the surgeon after my child's procedure?

The surgeon usually comes to check your child after their procedure. They update you about the surgery and answer any questions that you may have.

Sometimes, the surgeon may give permission for the nurses to send home (discharge) your child. This avoids keeping you waiting until the surgeon has finished all the cases on their operating list.

When can my child go home?

Your child can go home on the same day as their procedure when they:

- feel comfortable
- can manage (tolerate) their usual food and drink
- are not feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting)
- are behaving as they usually do

Please supervise your child carefully on the journey home. According to the sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) guidelines, it is best to avoid long car journeys for babies under 1 year of age. If you travel home by car, it is important that:

- you stop for frequent breaks to feed your baby and change their position
- an adult sits with the baby in the back of the car

After you go home

How can I manage my child's pain after their procedure?

If your child appears to be in any pain at home, we recommend giving them paracetamol and ibuprofen. Please remember to buy these medicines before the day of your child's procedure. It is also important to make sure that your child drinks plenty of fluids.

It is safe to give the 2 medicines at the same time, ideally with food. This is easier to plan and the medicines work in different ways. You can give your child:

- 1 recommended amount (dose) of paracetamol every 4 to 6 hours and no more than 4 doses in 24 hours
- 1 dose of ibuprofen every 6 to 8 hours and no more than 3 doses in 24 hours

You may find the following chart helpful to keep track of your child's medicines.

Home medicine chart for parents

Medicine	Time to give	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Paracetamol								
Ibuprofen								

Do I need to look for any symptoms after my child's procedure?

A small white or yellow spot (ulcer) often appears under your child's tongue within 2 days of the procedure. This is part of the healing process and should reduce within 2 weeks.

Contact a GP or the plastic surgery team if you feel that your child is unwell, or you notice:

- bleeding from the wound (anything more than a streak of blood in their spit)
- infection (redness or swelling under the tongue at the wound site)
- a high temperature (fever)
- your child is not eating or drinking well

If you are very concerned or notice these symptoms outside of working hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), call 999 or go to A&E.

Do you see my child again after their procedure?

Yes, your child has a follow-up appointment face to face in the clinic or by phone. This appointment usually takes place 5 to 7 days after the procedure.

Contact us

If you **cannot keep your appointment**, contact our admissions team, **phone** 020 7188 9098, **email** gst-tr.paediatricadmissions@nhs.net

If your child has a **cough, cold or high temperature** in the 2 weeks before the procedure, contact our pre-assessment team, **phone** 020 7188 7188 extension 58209

If you have any **concerns during working hours (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)** about your child's surgery, call the paediatric plastic surgery clinical nurse specialist, **phone** 07747 204 489

If you have any **concerns outside working hours (Monday to Friday, 5pm to 9am or at the weekend)** about your child's surgery, contact the on-call plastic surgery doctor through the main switchboard, **phone** 020 7188 7188 and ask for bleep 0155

If you have any **concerns from 24 hours after surgery** about your child's health, contact your child's specialist surgical team or GP surgery, or **phone** NHS 111

If you are concerned that your child is **seriously unwell** at any time, go to your nearest A&E or **phone** 999

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm **email** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint contact the resolution department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch, **phone** 020 7188 8815 **email** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers. They are supported by experienced nurses and paramedics, **phone** 111 (24 hours a day) **web** www.111.nhs.uk



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