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## Post-Operative Instructions for *Tethered Oral Tissue (TOT) Release*

Today your infant had a frenectomy procedure to release a restrictive tethered oral tissue. Frenectomy procedures are important as they enable a significant improvement in oral function and growth.

As the recovery from this frenectomy procedure begins, we request that you please follow these instructions:

- **Immediately after the procedure:**
  - It is important to begin feeding your infant as you feel comfortable (i.e. nursing or bottle, etc.). He/she may initially refuse but will feed quickly.
- **A few hours after the procedure – pain management:**
  - Your infant may become very fussy and/or show signs of discomfort.
  - Try rocking, singing and skin-to-skin contact as soothing techniques. Feeding in a warm bath may also help provide comfort as your infant tries to relearn latching.
  - Slowly massaging the lips and cheeks in a circular motion will help reduce irritation and may help your child want to suck.
  - Tylenol, at the indicated appropriate dose and interval, may be given to help with pain management.
  - Arnica Montana (homeopathic remedy for inflammation) can be given as well - **dissolve 10 pellets in 2-3 ounces of breast milk**; keep the milk chilled and administered two ml every 1-2 hours for the first 1-2 days, then as needed.
- **Starting the next day – exercises:**
  - You will notice white patches forming where the surgical releases were done – this is absolutely normal and will disappear as the tissue heals.
  - With clean hands and short nails or with gloves, it will be important to begin stretching exercises at least **six times per day, at least 10 repetitions each**. *Coconut oil may help for tissue healing.*
    - **Lip tie stretch**
      - Grasp the lip and lift it up and back towards the nose or down and back towards the chin.
      - Hold this position for at least **three seconds**.
      - Massage along the gum ridge and into the fold of the lip, rub the diamond shape up-down and side-to-side **five times** with moderate pressure.
    - **Tongue tie stretch**
      - Place ring finger and pinky beneath the chin, middle finger at the chin and both index fingers at the left/right corners of the diamond – this will ensure adequate visualization of the site





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- Use both index fingers to **lift the tongue** as other fingers push the chin down. The diamond will unfold.
  - Massage the diamond shape up-down and side-to-side **five times** with moderate pressure.
  - Following these stretching exercises is imperative to prevent reattachment and should be continued up to at least **six weeks** post-procedure.
- To ensure the best outcome post-frenectomy, it is **highly recommended** to seek the guidance and assistance of other providers who may help to re-establish and improve your breastfeeding relationship with your infant, **i.e. lactation consultant, craniosacral therapist, oromyofunctional therapist, chiropractor, etc.** If you require assistance, we would be happy to provide a referral to our recommended providers.

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### Some additional information:

Normal things you may notice after the procedure:

- **Increased fussiness and inconsolable crying during the first week** - it is best to give pain medication in order to stay ahead of any discomfort immediately after the procedure, and may be necessary during the first several days.
- **Bleeding after doing stretches** - it is normal after adequate stretching and should quickly stop.
- **Difficulty with latch during the first week** - due to initial soreness and relearning of the suck, feedings may be inconsistent and sometimes, latch/symptoms may worsen before getting better. Thus it is critical to follow up with your lactation consultant.
- **Increased choking and spit up** - as an initial adjustment to the change in latch, this may occur and is usually temporary but should be addressed with your lactation consultant.
- **Increased drooling and saliva bubbles** - the healing process increases saliva production and with increased tongue movement, surplus saliva is created.
- **Increased sleeping** - this is a coping mechanism for discomfort but may also indicate that the infant is feeding better and is therefore more satisfied.

Suck training exercises:

- Suck training exercises are helpful to regain proper tongue function. The exercises shown below are **not** intended to replace the in-person guidance of a lactation consultant and any delay in seeking expert help may compromise the progress of improving your breastfeeding relationship with your infant.



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### Exercise 1: Finger Sucking

Use a finger (with a trimmed and filed nail) that closely matches the size of your nipple. Place the backside of this finger against the baby's chin with the tip of your finger touching the underside of the nose. This should stimulate the baby to gape widely. Allow the baby to draw in finger, pad side up, and suck. The *tongue should cover the lower gums* and your finger should be drawn into the juncture of the hard and soft palate. If the tongue is not forward over the lower gums, or if the back of the tongue bunches up, gently press down on the tongue (saying "down") and use forward (towards the lips) traction.



### Exercise 2: Down and Out Stroking

Begin as in exercise 1, but turn finger over and press down on the back of the tongue and draw slowly out using downward and forward (toward lips) pressure on the tongue. Repeat a few times.



### Exercise 3: Lateralizing Side to Side

Gently stroke the baby's lips until the mouth opens, and then stroke the lower and upper gums side to side. The tongue should follow your finger.



### Exercise 4: Circular Strokes

Touch the baby's chin, nose and upper lip. When the baby opens wide, gently massage the tip of the tongue in circular motions pressing down and out, encouraging the tongue to move over the lower gums. Massage can continue back further on the tongue with light pressure as the finger moves back on the tongue and firmer pressure when the finger moves forward. Avoid gagging baby.



### Exercise 5: Desensitizing Gag Reflex

If a baby has a *high or narrow palate* and gags on the nipple or insists on a shallow latch, it may help to desensitize the palate. Begin by massaging the baby's palate near the gum-line. Progressively massage deeper, but avoid gagging the baby. Repeat exercise until the baby will allow a finger to touch his palate while sucking on a finger. It may take several days of short exercise sessions to be effective.

If you have any questions/concerns, please call the office at [571-799-0559](tel:571-799-0559).