

Child/Adult Tongue Release Post-operative Exercises

The purpose of post-operative exercises

Post-operative exercises following tongue-tie surgery are not intended to increase muscle-strength or to improve speech, but to:

1. Develop new muscle movements, particularly those involving tongue-tip elevation and protrusion, inside and outside of the mouth.
2. Increase kinaesthetic awareness of the full range of movements the tongue and lips can perform. In this context, kinaesthetic awareness refers to knowing where a part of the mouth is, what it is doing, and what it feels like.
3. Encourage tongue movements related to cleaning the oral cavity, including sweeping the insides of the cheeks, fronts and backs of the teeth, and licking right around both lips.

Will the exercises improve speech?

The exercises will *not* improve speech. If you want to improve speech, you *have* to work on speech.

The exercises must be individualised

Discuss these suggested exercises with your/ your child's myofunctional therapist or speech-language pathologist / speech and language therapist before commencing them as they may not be suitable for your child. The SLP/SLP will modify them according to your child's age and requirements.

Encourage oral play

Encourage oral play generally, and do a selection of the following exercises, in any order, in 3 to 5 minute bursts, once or twice daily for 3 or 4 weeks post-operatively. Have a torch and hand-mirror handy. Make it fun.

Exercises

1. Stretch your tongue up towards your nose, then down towards your chin. Repeat.
2. You can vary the exercise above and make it more interesting by putting a dab of food in various positions above the top lip, to be retrieved with the tongue tip.
3. Open your mouth widely. Touch your big front teeth with your tongue with your mouth still open. Can you FEEL how tough your teeth are?
4. Look in the mirror. Still with your mouth open wide, say dar-dar-dar, now say nar-nar-nar, now say tar-tar. Look in the mirror to see what your tongue is doing. Can you FEEL where it is?
5. Lick your whole top lip from one side to the other, now go back the other way.
6. Lick your whole bottom lip from one side to the other, go back the other way.
7. See how many times you can lick your lips right around.
8. Poke your tongue out as far as it will go.
9. Shut your mouth and poke it into your left cheek to make a lump.
10. Do the same on the other side.
11. Now see if you can make your top lip fat without opening your mouth.
12. Can you go in-out-in-out-in-out with your tongue? (demonstrate)
13. Put your tongue behind your teeth and shut your mouth. Can you find your big top teeth with your tongue while your mouth is still shut? FEEL how tough your teeth are.
14. Play your own version of copy cats, Simon Says or Follow the Leader incorporating the preceding movements.