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Labial Frenectomy

What is a Lip Tie:

The piece of tissue behind your lip that connects it to the gum tissue is called the frenulum. When these membranes are too thick or too stiff, they can keep the lips from moving freely. This condition is called a lip tie. You can find this frenulum by pulling your child's lip gently away from their gums.

The connective tissue makes a "v" shape where it connects from the inside of the lip to the gum tissue right above, in front of, and/or between where the 2 front teeth are or will erupt. This tissue often blanches white and can be uncomfortable to the patient when tension is put on it.

Consequences of Untreated Lip Tie:

- A gap between the front teeth
- Recession of the gums
- Trapped food, drinks, plaque, and bacteria
- Discomfort and difficulty with brushing teeth
- Demineralized and decayed tooth structure
- Loss of tooth structure and tooth loss
- Dental infections

Procedure:

A frenectomy neatly severs the membrane connecting the lip to the gums. Soft tissue lasers are commonly used. Topical or local anesthesia is typically administered inside the lip before the procedure is performed. No sutures are needed for this revision when performed with a laser.

Healing:

Within the first 24-48 hours after the procedure, a grayish-white patch will form in the area where the incision was made with the laser. This is the space that was created for improved lip movement. This is NOT infection or thrush. In about 2-4 weeks, the tissue will return to its normal appearance but will ideally not attach as closely or as tightly to the gum line. Slight puffiness of the lip is also normal since the lip had to be held and pulled to complete the procedure and there is inflammation in the site of the initial incision.

Pain Control:

Discomfort may be experienced by some patients, especially during stretches, but usually diminishes quickly. Tylenol/Motrin can be alternated every 3 hours for pain if needed. It is recommended to take pain medicine 30 minutes prior to stretching. You may apply a small amount of coconut oil, homeopathic tincture, cold water, or breastmilk to your fingers before stretching. Cold items (such as popsicles or ice cubes) and frequent sips of cold water may help with inflammation and pain as well.

Stretches:

For the upper lip, simply place your index fingers under the lip next to the diamond and pull it out and up towards the nose as high as it will go (until it bumps into resistance). It is helpful to have the lower jaw partially closed to allow for maximum range of motion of the lip when stretching. Then gently sweep your finger over the wound from side to side for 1-2 seconds. Use your right index finger for the left side and your left index finger for the right side.

For the lower lip, the stretches are the same with the exception of pulling the lip out and down instead of up towards the nose.

It is very important to start stretching the lip area at least 4 hours after the procedure to maintain patency of the opening and to complete the stretches 4-6 times a day for at least 4 weeks or until your practitioner advises you otherwise. The mouth heals very rapidly, so the stretches and exercises help to keep the diamond opening from reattaching.