

Frenectomy

What is the frenum?

Your lips, cheeks and tongue are connected to your jawbone with a fold of tissue called the frenum.

If the frenum is too long or too short, it can cause problems and should be removed. This procedure is called a frenectomy.

The frenum at all stages of life

The frenum can be fixed in all stages of life. If an infant's, frenum is too long, it can make it difficult for the baby to breast feed.

Toddlers just learning to speak may get "tongue tied" because the frenum is close to the tip of the tongue. Even teens and adults have this problem, and a frenectomy can help them, too.

An abnormally attached frenum can prevent baby teeth from properly erupting.

As a child ages, a frenum that is attached too closely to the teeth can cause a gap to form between the teeth. The gap cannot be closed unless the abnormal frenum attachment is surgically removed.



An abnormal frenum causes gum recession

An abnormal frenum causes a gap to form between the teeth



A normal frenum



An abnormal frenum

A short or tight frenum will constantly tug on the gum tissue and can cause the tissue to pull away from the tooth, leading to serious gum recession, tooth decay, and periodontal disease.

For adults who wear a denture, the frenum can pull on the denture and loosen it, which makes wearing the denture extremely uncomfortable.

The procedure

A frenectomy is performed in the dental office usually with just a local anesthetic, and takes only about 10 or 15 minutes. The frenum can be removed with a scalpel or a laser.

If a laser is used, it is very important that you remain completely still, so you may be offered sedation if you think it might help you relax.

If your dentist must suture the area, healing may take a few weeks.

Homecare

Rinsing with warm salt water will help keep the area clean. Carefully brush and floss so that the surgical area won't be disturbed.

Your dentist will want to see you in about a week to check on your progress and, perhaps, to remove stitches.

A frenectomy is a simple procedure that can keep your smile healthy and your mouth comfortable.