

Encouragement for mothers experiencing tongue-tie related breastfeeding challenges

It is a pleasure to share with you our experience with our breastfeeding journey and hopefully give you a bit of a pick me up during what I know is a really hard time. At least, it was for me. It took us about 7 weeks from our baby Nora's birth to get to a place where breastfeeding worked like it should. That was about 6 weeks longer than I had ever anticipated, and 6 weeks feels like an absolute eternity to a new mom dealing with this issue. But, I can tell you that with Melissa's guidance, we DID reach a place where breastfeeding is completely pain free, all of the time. There were plenty of moments along the way that I did not believe this was ever going to happen, and considered giving up many times. But luckily, we didn't, and it has paid off immeasurably. I'm glad you have Melissa to guide you through this, her help worked for us in the end, especially her cheerleading.

We lucked out in that we began working with Melissa on Nora's third day. We had checked out of our birth center and already I knew something wasn't right. Nora could latch well it seemed, and was fully interested in breastfeeding, and my supply seemed to be on track but the pain was intolerable. The classic toe-curling pain from a tongue tie already by day 3. We were referred to Melissa by another lactation consultant that couldn't accommodate us until the next week, and she was an absolute godsend. She came over to our house, and within an hour had diagnosed a mild tongue tie. That was on a Saturday, and by Tuesday we had her frenotomy completed by Dr. Hertler. The frenotomy itself was harder for me than the baby. It took all of about 5 minutes from beginning to end, and she bled a little and cried a little but I nursed her right away after (even with the pain) and she was fine by the time we left the dr office. By this point, I was mostly finger feeding Nora, with some bottle and some breastfeeding mixed in as much as I could physically stand. I also thought the pain would have cleared up within a day or two after the frenulum release, but it didn't. And that was the hardest part. Apparently a mild tongue tie is even harder to recover from because the change for the baby is more subtle.

Day after day passed with little or no improvement. We tried to do the exercises Melissa gave us. I cried many, many, many tears about not being able to stand the pain in order to feed my baby from the breast. The pain was one thing, but the guilt was almost as bad. I emailed Melissa several times during the middle of the night, despondent. She replied soon the next day, always with words of encouragement. We even did a second appt with Dr. Hertler to release her upper lip attachment to the gum (I forget the technical term) when she was about 5 weeks old. We were willing to try just about anything. And with each follow up with Melissa, I grew more hopeful, but it never seemed to come together for us. Until, it did. Just one week, it stopped hurting. I don't remember why or exactly when, but it did. The pain entirely went away. It was absolute MAGIC. My supply was still strong and I've been able to feed Nora without issue ever since. She is almost four months old now and in the 96th percentile for height and weight - clearly something is working! I since learned it can take as long as 12 or 14 weeks for it to stop hurting, according to some other moms I talked to. It's the hardest thing, but so worth it. It is extremely easy to feed her now. Stick with it!!!!!!

I hope this is helpful to know. Every mother and baby's story is different, this was just our journey. I wish you well on yours. – Elena G., Portland, OR

**Note from Melissa Cole of Luna Lactation – “I am so very happy for Elena and Nora. They went through a lot to get to a comfortable spot with breastfeeding. It is a testament to the fact that “just a mild tongue tie” can really make or break a breastfeeding relationship. I am glad to see they made it! And Miss Nora is the sweetest, chubbiest baby...all thanks to mama’s milk! Good work Elena and Nora!”*