

Tongue Matters: What EVERYONE should know about the TONGUE!

By Dawn M. Moore ClinScD., CCC-SLP

Expressions Speech, Language, and Myofunctional Center

Hello! It's time to share some more information about the tongue and its often ignored, but crucial role in your overall health.

As many of you know, in addition to being an SLP, I'm working on my certification in orofacial myology. This specialty looks at the structures of the face and how they are balanced and interacting with each other.

Like many professionals in this area, I went down this road after desperately trying to get help for my own daughter for a severe tongue thrust which I diagnosed at 18 months of age. A tongue thrust is an abnormal resting posture of the tongue on the teeth which puts undue pressure on the teeth and causes them to push out of alignment. At night, she was breathing with her mouth open and causing further damage to her palate and overall facial structure, not to mention how she eats, swallows, and breathes.

This is considered to be an orofacial myofunctional disorder or OMD. Our training as SLPs only treats the symptoms of OMDs and basically ignores the tongue and its role in oral rest posture, feeding, swallowing, and breathing.

The tongue is absolutely amazing....when it rests properly. This normal resting posture is on the palate with the tip of the tongue right behind but not touching the teeth. When it doesn't rest there, the results are altered faces, malocclusions, narrowed airways, and life-long problems.

At this point you may be wondering why is she talking about all of this?

Once you learn about oral resting posture, you begin to look at everyone's face and analyze what may be going on. To be honest it's really hard to turn it off! On Facebook, I see pictures of so many people and their kids and I want to message them and say that we need to talk!

The things I'm seeing include:

- No upper lip (pink part) showing when smiling
- Mouth open in many pictures
- A tight smile with barely any teeth showing
- Faces that are getting longer (which should never happen)
- Droopy eyes
- Asymmetry in the face in the eyes, smile, teeth, or jaw
- Mouth open in sleeping pictures
- Tented (pulled up) upper lip
- Crooked teeth
- Gaps in teeth
- Gummy smiles
- Under or overbite
- Tongue resting on bottom of the mouth
- Tongue barely passing lips when sticking tongue out
- Notched tongue when sticking out
- Parents talking about speech problems



Tongue Matters: What EVERYONE should know about the TONGUE! (continued)

These issues can and should be corrected in early childhood. What was once considered to be bad genetics from the parents may truly be poor resting posture of the tongue or a breathing issue.

Three major things can cause poor tongue resting posture:

1. Enlarged tonsils and adenoids

Kids should NEVER have noisy breathing when sleeping unless they are sick. Snoring is a warning sign. No one should do it and this is why adults end up on CPAP machines.

They MUST have their mouths closed unless they are sick.

If the tonsils are blocking the airway, the body will do whatever it needs to do to survive. This means it will open the mouth to breathe and the tongue must drop to the floor of the mouth to open the airway.

If your child is breathing through the mouth at night and/or during the day look in the throat to see what is going on. Get the child to the doctor/ENT.

Note: Snoring can be caused by being overweight which is similar to a primary cause in adults.

2. Sucking habits

Thumb, finger, pacifiers, blanket, or lip sucking can alter the natural resting posture of the tongue.

I don't discourage pacifier use for SLEEP until the age of 1. However, walking around with a pacifier or sucking fingers during the day is doing a lot of damage to the structure of the mouth. This damage will lead the child to the orthodontist for a \$6,000 set of braces.

The good news is that it can be reversed by eliminating the habits early!

3. Tongue and Lip Ties

Many of my friends/colleagues have told me about their child's ties yet the field of speech-language pathology largely ignores them. The argument is that the tongue doesn't have to move much to produce speech. While that may be true, the tongue does need to have FREE range of motion for all of its other function. What most people don't realize is that tongue and lip ties used to be released ALL THE TIME AT BIRTH because breastfeeding was going to be very difficult if they weren't.

This was back when breastfeeding was THE way to feed your baby. Then formula and bottles became the new way and the tongue and lip didn't need to be released anymore. Why? Because bottle feeding is VERY different than breastfeeding. The sad part is that while breastfeeding actually works the muscles of the face for maximum growth and development, bottle feeding does not. I wish I had known about ties. Maybe my breastfeeding journey would have been a lot different.

We are so behind in this area!

In Brazil they have a Frenulum Inspection Law where EVERY newborn is screened for ties and they are released at birth! They do this to prevent feeding, breathing, chewing, and swallowing problems and to encourage proper facial growth and development!

What does all of this mean?

Breathing through the nose is necessary for optimal growth and health.

Tongue Matters: What EVERYONE should know about the TONGUE! (continued)

SLEEPING

Think about how you feel when you don't sleep well. Even just one night affects your performance and mood the next day.

Imagine if you are a child and you've never slept well. The difference between adults and children is that our brains aren't in the developmental stage! Sleeping should be restorative and when it's not we see children with attention issues, learning problems, lack of self-regulation, emotional issues, anxiety etc.

Does this mean every child with ADHD is not sleeping well? No! It simply means this should be an area that is assessed in all children, ESPECIALLY those who are struggling with behaviors, attention, and sleep.

When children start down the mouth breathing path, the effects on their developing brains can be catastrophic. There is research on sleep disordered breathing in children but it's mostly ignored. We tend to think our kids are sleeping fine, but what if they aren't?

The number of kids we work with in our private practice that are walking around with their mouths hanging open, breathing through their mouth, sleeping poorly, and/or snoring during sleep is climbing! We are educating parents on the detrimental effects these issues will have on the child's face and their overall health. It's a conversation we have to have a few times a week!

What can you do?

Look at the kids you serve, your own kids, your friends' kids, kids in your extended family and see if you notice any of these issues. Is the mouth open? Is the tongue resting low? Are they snoring? Is the face asymmetrical? Is the smile lopsided? Are the teeth crooked/turning? Is the upper lip pulled up?

If you have a child with ADHD or other special needs see if they are sleeping well. If they aren't, find doctors who will listen to you about airway health. The ADA recommends Dentists begin looking at the airway because the word is out about the effects of sleep disordered breathing.

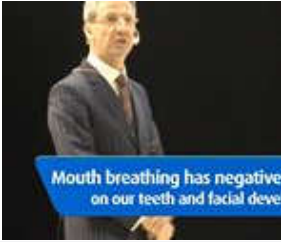
I was recently invited to present for an orthodontist and his staff because of all of the trouble he's personally had with mouth breathing incorrect tongue posture and facial surgeries. He didn't want his own kids and the kids he serves to go through the same things. I applaud him. He figured out that needing braces may be the result of mouth breathing habits, blocked airways, and tongue tie. He knows that by seeing these kids earlier we may be able to reverse the effects of these problems.

THE FACE TELLS ALL!

If you have questions or need help message me on Facebook (Dawn Zeis Moore) or email me info@expressionspeech.com. Share this post with EVERYONE!

For more information watch the video by Dr. Flutter, a dentist and orthodontist with 40+ years of experience. <https://youtu.be/BYRgfHRRP4A>

Tongue Matters: What EVERYONE should know about the TONGUE! (continued)



YOUTUBE.COM

Dr. John Flutter: Negative Impact of Mouth Breathing in Children

Breathing Conference Karolinska Institute 2014. Our smile and facial features, the position of the teeth,...

Visit the IAOM, International Association of Orofacial Myology to learn more about orofacial myofunctional disorders. www.iaom.com

Google Mouth Breathing and/or Tongue Resting Posture and you will find even more videos!

Thank you for reading this information. Please share it with whomever you'd like!

Dawn M. Moore ClinScD., CCC-SLP

Clinical Doctorate in Speech-Language Pathology

Owner/Founder

Expressions Speech, Language, and Myofunctional Center

www.expressionspeech.com

