

Dear Moms and Dads,

I am a breast feeding mama.....and a dentist. This is my personal testimony.

My first baby was born 3.5 weeks early. I attributed her early deliver to her nursing every 1-2 hours, gassy, colicky and spitting up and wouldn't sleep more than 2.5 hours at night and I accepted it. She was always in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles in weight and I was having no pain. She took a bottle for the first 2 months of life but with a preemie nipple. At 4 months old, she refused the bottle and my mom had to finger/syringe feed her from 4-6 months while I was at work until she could manage a sippy cup. We nursed all night long until she was one and then she gave it up cold turkey.

When my second baby came, I was engorged and over producing to the point that I was uncomfortable. By one month my daughter was having massively wet diapers every hour and nursing every 2 hours. She cried out in pain from gas, thrashed at the breast in the evening and was an overall unhappy baby. She was only calmed when I was at my wits end and broke down and gave her a 4 oz. bottle of formula - yes I said it – formula! Then she slept for 5 hours! I was an emotional mess!!!! How is it that my daughter could be happier with formula than what nature makes for her????

Enter my Pediatrician who at the one month checkup sent me to IBCLC, Jill Davis. Jill first told me that she suspected my daughter was lip and tongue tied and I was FLOORED because as a dentist I was in denial - how could I have missed that?!?!

Enter the massive research part of my life while I was nursing at night. I was also now doing all kinds of things (dairy free diet, block feeding, laid back nursing etc.) to help my daughter and to keep breastfeeding. I was struggling and my husband was ready for me to give up - the stress of trying to stay sane while trying to breastfeed was incomprehensible. I found that my education had thoroughly taught me everything I needed to know -- how to analyze the tie/tethered tissue both anatomically and functionally and fix the low, high, loose and/or TIGHT frenulum attachments in children, teens, adults and elderly but it was NEVER talked about in infants.

So I went racing to Dr. Notestine and I was palms sweating nervous, but I knew by my mommy gut that this TOT had to be taken care of or I was going to have to stop BF (did I mention that my daughter was now 14 lbs. and 7.5 weeks old, gassy, colicky, lipstick shaped nipples, etc). He looked at me and said “Becky the same tethered tissue we check for in children and adults during the exam is the same tissue that is restricting your baby from nursing effectively – it doesn’t just develop over the first few years of life; you are BORN with the tethered tissue”. This was the light bulb moment for this sleep deprived mama!

Revision was completed by laser and in 2 minutes we were nursing. She actually got a deep latch and I could feel the deep tug of the milk being pulled out like a breast pump. I was in tears - tears of joy and tears of regret, not getting this looked at earlier!!

On my 2 hour drive home, my thoughts went to how can I be of help to other moms and babies? Tears came down my face again. There are dentists on every corner; there are lasers in most offices. There is

no reason that moms should have to drive hours to get the frenectomy completed. We as dentists are all capable of doing this procedure. I joined the IATP at the advice and guidance of Dr Notestine and went to the conference in October 2014. I bought the laser and started helping moms and babies immediately. Yes, I was 6 months postpartum and yes, I was an emotional mess, but I had to start helping. No one in Central Ohio was treating these babies and breastfeeding relationships are dying because of it.

It was not easy. After revision it was 2 steps forward and one step back. Zantac had to be prescribed for about 3 weeks 2 times per day then we started slowly eliminating it - all while I am dairy free, caffeine free, carbonated water free. We had one last large projectile vomit 6 weeks post revision and then she turned a corner and we never looked back.

I have had to battle Pediatricians, ENT's, Nurse practitioners, and other dentists - but it is a battle that I feel obligated to fight for. We don't know what we don't know until you learn it. I have read the didactic info of how it was taught and that babies were routinely treated until the industrial revolution. I have heard from Peds and Doulas lecturing from other countries on how they are looking at every baby and treating within the first week of life - but in America it is being omitted and brushed off daily- so very sad!!!!

My point is after my long story is that yes - there is a HUGE gap in education with the Medical and Dental students - I have suffered because of my own lack of knowledge and now that I have opened my mind and educated myself I have a wonderful BF relationship with my second baby.

I hope you get the questions you are asking answered - and my only advice is to keep asking them until you get them answered correctly-----the more it is asked, the more attention is brought to the subject, hopefully then more Peds will start to look and start referring moms to the people that can help them.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Jordan*