

# Infant Oral Habilitation:

The IBCLC's role in helping families navigate release through habilitation.

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In regards to infant oral restriction (tethered oral tissues), the IBCLC's role is to provide unbiased assessment, information, local knowledge and support the family in their decision in treatment or compensation.

## Assessment

- 3 Part Assessment
  - Digital Evaluation. Check for function/dysfunction and structure.
    - Palate structure, Suck/vacuum strength, Lip seal, Tongue movement pattern and position, Lateralization mobility, Extension, Cupping, Humping, Thrusting, Peristaltic motion, Posterior drop
  - Visual Assessment
    - Have parent help hold baby, Head extension helps
    - Describe tissue, show restrictions. Use language parents are familiar with.
    - Take your time, talk to baby
  - Functional Assessment\*
    - What happens with function when we bring the baby to the breast? The IBCLC is the only practitioner assessing this piece, it is SO important!
      - Do you see chomping, work of breathing, milk leaking, clicking or snapback sounds? Is baby comfortable? Is the parent comfortable?

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## Treating the whole body

- Preparing for treatment
  - Discuss options
  - Set expectations, timeline, and practice aftercare
- Bodywork
  - Bodywork is an important component in preparing the body for release. Frequency varies based on provider and individual needs of the patient.
    - Pediatric Chiropractor, Osteopath, Craniosacral Therapy, Myofascial Release, Cranial Facial Release Therapy
    - Goal: relax the surrounding fascia. "Relaxing the rubberband"
- Follow-up support
  - Send written document before release.
  - Follow-up appointment 2-3 days post-release
  - Review aftercare instructions per release provider
  - Observe feed and provide support for feeding with new mobility.
  - Oral Exercises
  - Additional 1 week follow-up (optional)
- Exercises
  - IBCLC Master Class. Learn Oral exercises and movements to better assess and help your clients with exercises and movements.
    - <https://www.ibclcmasterclass.com/>

## The IBCLC's Role

- Support
  - Find local providers (release and bodywork)
    - Reach out, if possible observe a release procedure.
    - Learn aftercare protocols the release provider recommends.
    - Be able to re-teach aftercare to ensure your clients feel confident and are successful.
  - Have a "real" conversation about what the release and aftercare really look like.

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- Compensatory Feeding
    - Respect the decision not to treat.
    - Teach compensatory breastfeeding. Help the dyad find positions/techniques that allow them to compensate for restricted tissue.
  - Educate
    - Education for Parents
      - Find resources parents can utilize to do more research on tethered oral tissue, release, etc.
      - Make a resource list, play list, blog with easy links.
    - Professional Education
      - Research
        - [Tongue Tied Book](#) available on Amazon
      - Attend professional training
        - Highly Recommend "IBCLC Masterclass: Oral Habilitation for the Breastfeeding Dyad"
      - Join Professional Groups
      - Continue learning and growing.