

WHERE DOES YOUR TONGUE REST?

A good resting tongue position is important for many reasons and has been linked to improper facial development, poor tooth alignment, altered speech, altered breathing, neck and jaw pain, and potentially headaches. Our tongue is the strongest muscle of our body for its size and therefore is a muscle that should be utilised to help hold our jaw and face in a good position as we are resting. For youth, a good tongue position is important to allow the palate and teeth to grow correctly without the tongue getting in the way of that development.

**The ideal resting posture for our mouth and tongue is to have the tip of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth just behind the front teeth, with the lips pursed, teeth slightly parted, and the facial and jaw muscles relaxed. When swallowing, the tongue should be pressed up against the top of the mouth and not sticking forward into the teeth.**

By having a good resting tongue position, we are then resting with our facial and neck muscles more relaxed, which will reduce the load on the surrounding muscles which can be a large contributor to both neck and jaw pain as well as headaches. A good resting tongue position can also reduce the incidence of grinding and clenching as the tongue is used to hold the jaw up rather than the facial muscles.

For breathing, a good tongue posture requires a resting position with the lips pursed. This then forces us to breath through our nose rather than mouth breathing. This has a wide array of health benefits including improved breathing mechanics which can help manage stress, improved cleaning of incoming air through the nasal passageways rather than the mouth, promote good development of the palate and teeth, and reduce the likelihood of sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea. For adults whose palate is already developed, this will not change the width of their palate but is still beneficial to reduce the secondary symptoms of a poor tongue position.

To start, begin by becoming more aware of your tongue and facial posture throughout the day. Notice differences in your positioning when you are stressed, relaxed, tired, etc. Start working to practice a good tongue posture and maintaining this position as you breathe normally through your nose.