

HARNESSING THE POWER OF YOUR MOUTH

BY DR. SUSAN MAPLES

There are about 57 oral-facial muscles that don't get a proper workout at the gym. Over-functioning or under-functioning mouth muscles are the root cause of many disorders such as breathing, swallowing, speech and TMJ function. Muscle dysfunction also can lead to poor posture, neck tension, crowded teeth and cosmetic facial abnormalities.

Oral Myofunctional Therapy (OMT) can help! It benefits people between 2 years old and 100 — the younger the better — who have established habits of open-mouth breathing, forward tongue posture, difficulty swallowing certain textures of foods, messy eating, TMJ problems, speech abnormalities, thumb/finger-sucking, or pacifier habits.

One-on-one therapy with a certified orofacial myologist (also called a Myofunctional therapist) can teach you how to repattern harmful oral-facial

muscle habits. By learning and practicing a series of OMT exercises, you can restore the strength and coordination of your tongue, lips and facial muscles in order to improve your speech clarity, establish normal swallowing patterns and improve correct tongue position for proper breathing. OMT can also help a child to learn to restore 24/7 nasal breathing after large tonsils and adenoids have been removed.

Tongue-tied?

If your tongue is even slightly tethered to the floor of the mouth, the 16 tongue muscles are unable to develop properly and position the tongue in its rightful resting place, up in the roof of the mouth. This generally leads to a narrow, high-vaulted palate, crowded teeth, a deviated nasal septum and narrow nose. The goal here is not only to surgically release the restriction but to also restore full and proper tongue function.

Releasing tongue ties is best accomplished in the first days of life, to allow for a proper breast latch. If planned after 2 years old, it is necessary to retrain and strengthen the tongue muscles in preparation for the surgery and continued until the tongue gains proper habitual function.

Goals for success include:

1. Foster 24/7 nasal breathing
2. Strengthen and tone the muscles of the tongue, lips and face
3. Promote ideal resting posture (lips closed and tongue on the roof of the mouth, nasal breathing)
4. Alleviate pain and dysfunction by identifying compensations of the jaw and neck during chewing, talking and swallowing
5. Prepare patients who are identified for successful tongue-tie and lip-tie release ■



Dr. Susan Maples is a dentist in Holt. She is also a speaker, health educator and author of "BlabberMouth! 77 Secrets Only Your Mouth Can Tell You to Live a Healthier, Happier, Sexier Life." Reach her at Susan@DrSusanMaples.com

Meet Sara Wilson, RDH, Certified Orofacial Myologist

As a total health dental practice, one of our goals is to optimize proper muscle function for a lifetime of optimal health, and secondarily for enhanced facial appearance. Effective OMT can restore breathing, swallowing, speech, bite and posture.

Dr. Susan and Sara work together in a collaborative partnership evaluating and treating oral muscle dysfunctions and tissue restrictions.

Our team is proud to work closely with a collaborative network of medical specialists including an ENT, Speech Pathologist, Craniofacial Osteopathic Physician, Pediatricians and Primary Care Physicians. **We aim to integrate all information needed to create personalized optimal treatment plans.**



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SUSAN MAPLES, DDS
Personalized Dentistry for a Lifetime of Health

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