

Oral Assessment

Functional Checklist

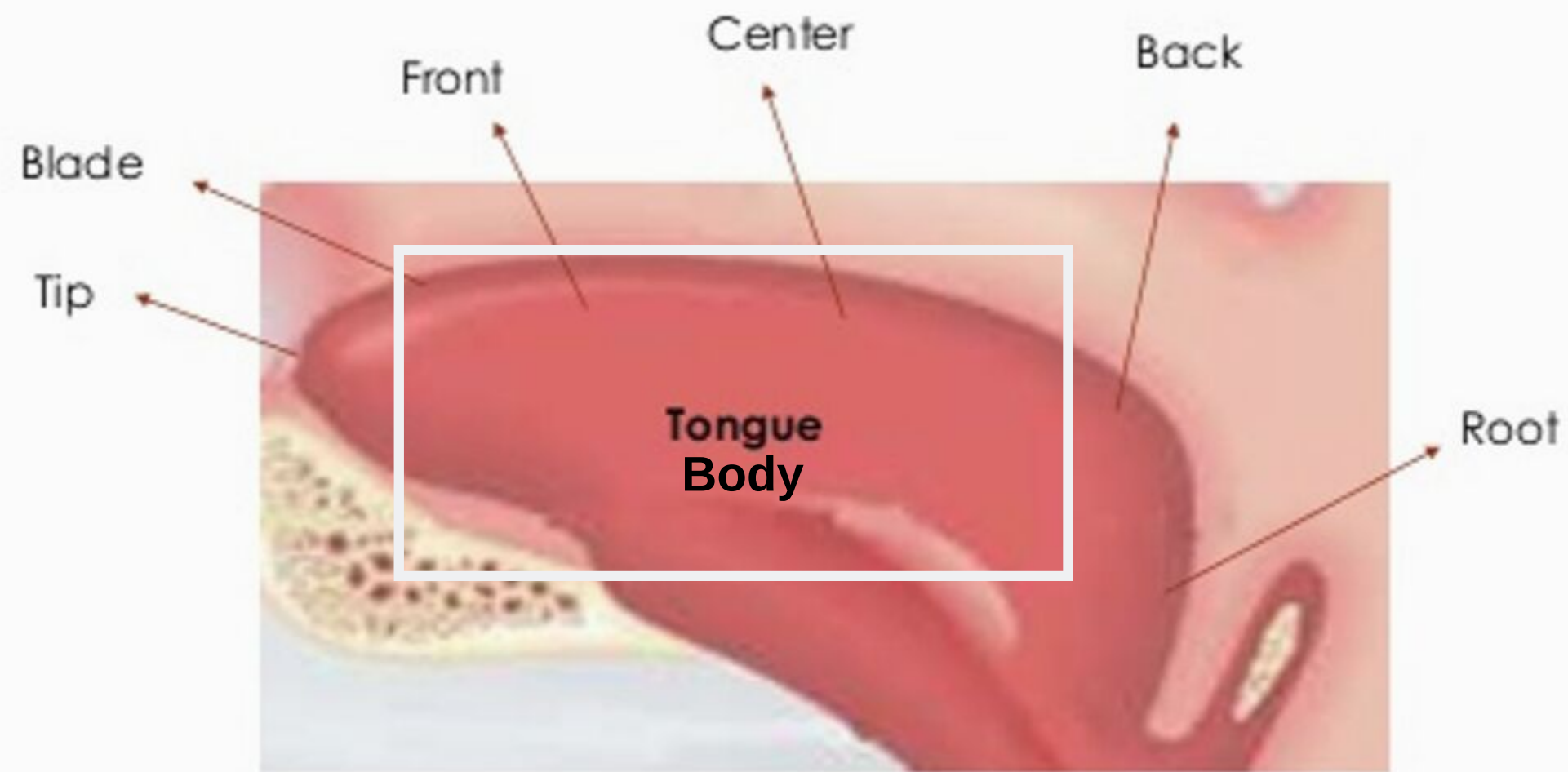
Please complete this assessment when baby is happy and alert, preferably either before baby eats or after your baby's had time to relax/ wind down after a feed and when they've had time to regain strength if they fatigue easily.

All of these activities do not have to be completed in one session. Follow your baby cues and stop when they ask you to.



Tongue Anatomy

Getting familiar with the parts of the tongue will help your ability to assess HOW your baby is using theirs.



JAW LAXITY ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Starting when your baby's mouth is closed, gently provide downward pressure with your index fingers so that their mouth opens to a "wide open" position.

EXPECTATION: Your baby should easily open their mouth to a "wide open" position.

MY BABY

- Easily opens their mouth to a "wide open" position
- Easily opens their mouth to a wide open position after a slight delay but no additional pressure
- Easily opens their mouth but won't open to a "wide open" position without additional pressure downward.
- Does not easily open their mouth and cannot assume a "wide open" position



JAW LAXITY

GAG REFLEX ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Rest your finger on your baby's lips in a "shh" position to allow them to open and accept your finger pad side up. Let them suck on your finger at a depth that is comfortable for them.

EXPECTATION: Your baby should be able to take your finger deep into their mouth, to where their hard and soft palate meet (see last page for guidance) , without gagging.

MY BABY

- Easily allows my finger to reach junction of hard and soft palate without gagging
- Gags before my finger reaches the hard and soft palate but after the bumpy ridges of the hard palate
- Gags when my pad gets to the bumpy ridges of the hard palate
- Gags at the breast, bottles, pacifiers



GAG REFLEX

LATERALIZATION ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Pad side down, gently rub your finger across the ridge of your baby's bottom gum line, starting from where the molars would erupt .
Complete on both sides.

EXPECTATION: Your baby should easily move their tongue side to side, following your finger

MY BABY

- Follows my finger from side to side with the tip of their tongue
- Follows my finger from side to side with the body of their tongue
- Follows my finger only on left side (Tip | Body)
- Follows my finger only on the right side (Tip | Body)
- Does not follow my finger at all



LATERALIZATION

BITE REFLEX ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Pad side down, gently hold your finger in the space where your baby's molars would erupt, ensuring to keep your finger on baby's gum line. Allow your baby to bite down on your finger. Complete on both sides.

EXPECTATION: Your baby should bite down on your finger with equal ease and strength on both sides



MY BABY

- Bites down on my finger with equal ease and strength on both sides
- My baby has more difficulty biting on one side (Right| Left)
- Does not bite on one side (Right | Left)
- Does not bite at all

BITE REFLEX

PUSH BACK ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Insert your finger near where the back molars would erupt, and with the pad of your finger, gently push into the side of your baby's tongue just under the side edge. Complete on both sides.

EXPECTATION: You should feel resistance or a "kick back" as your baby's tongue pushes back against your finger



MY BABY

- Engages both sides her tongue muscles to provide strong resistance or push back
- Engages only one side of her tongue to provide strong resistance or push back (Left | Right)
- Provides weak resistance or push back
- Does not push back or engage their tongue at all

PUSH BACK

CHEEK ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Insert your pinky into your baby's mouth with your pinky pad into the fleshy part of their cheek. Make small strokes (or pulses) with gently even pressure. Complete on both sides.

EXPECTATION: You should feel your baby engage their "smile muscles" by contracting their cheek muscles



MY BABY

- Engages both sides her tongue muscles to provide strong resistance or push back
- Engages only one side of her tongue to provide strong resistance or push back (Left | Right)
- Provides weak resistance or push back
- Does not push back or engage their tongue at all

**CHEEK
ENGAGEMENT**

TONGUE LIFT ASSESSMENT

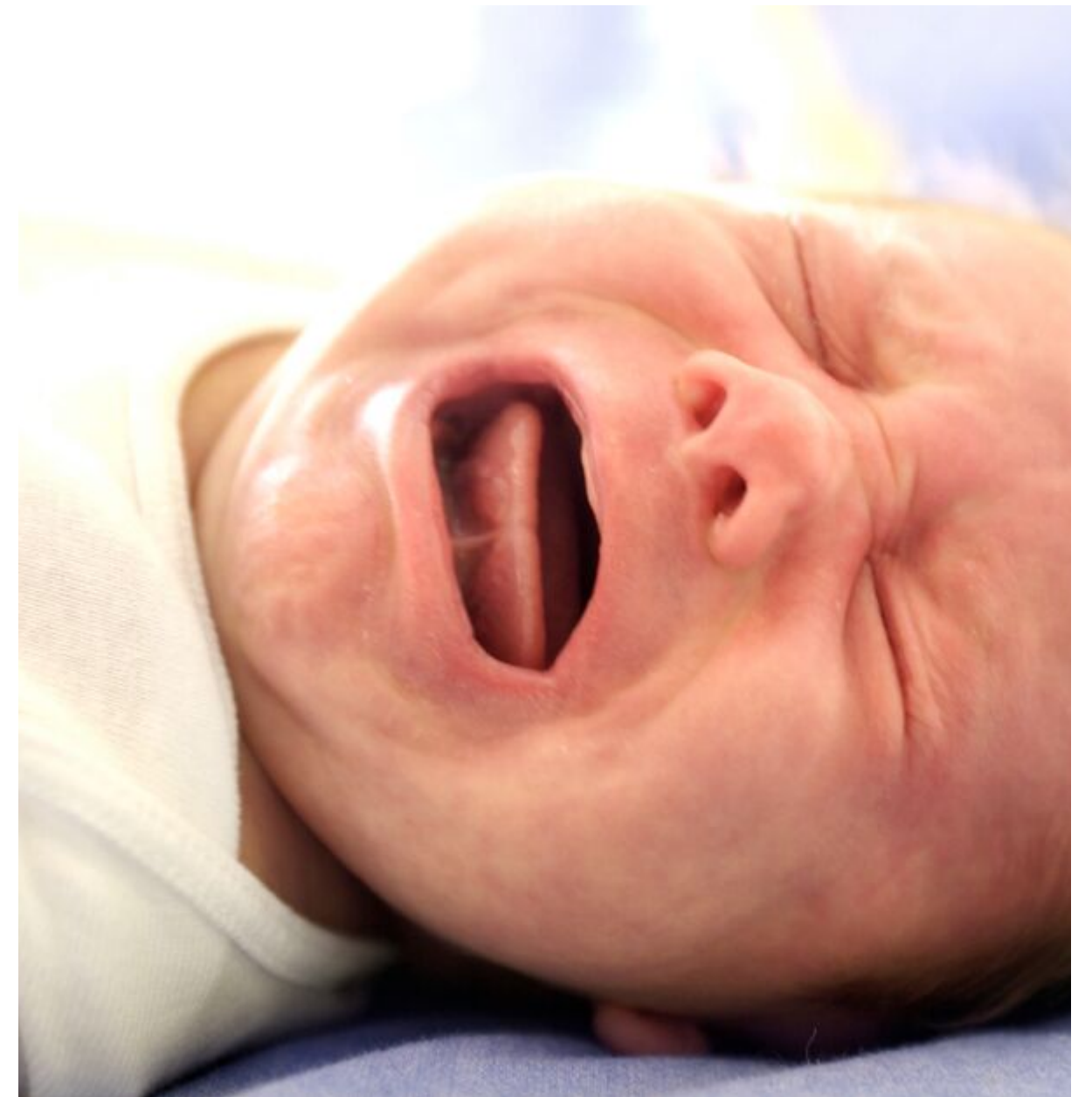
HOW TO: In the middle of your baby's upper lip, gently stroke upwards with the pad of your finger

EXPECTATION: Your baby should lift their tongue tip to reach your finger

[Click here to see a proper tongue lift](#)

MY BABY

- Lifts their tongue tip half way to upper lip (mid mouth)
- Lifts only the edges of their tongue half way to upper lip
- Tongue stays close to or at the bottom gum line
- Could reach their tongue tip to mid mouth if their jaw was more closed
- Attempts to lift tongue tip and edges but there's a dimple in the middle



Tongue lift

TONGUE EXTENSION ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: In the middle of your baby's lower lip, gently stroke downward with the pad of your finger

EXPECTATION: Your baby should extend their tongue to reach your finger, extending past the lower lip

MY BABY

- Extends their tongue over and past the lower lip
- Extends their tongue to the lower lip, touching the lower lip but not going over or past it
- Extends their tongue past the lower gum line but not to the lower lip
- Cannot extend their tongue past the lower gum line
- Has a dimple in their tongue or humps their tongue during extension



**TONGUE
EXTENSION**

TONGUE CUPPING ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Insert your index finger (or pinky if you have large hands) pad side up into baby's mouth. As they suck, gently pull the jaw so that the tongue is exposed.

EXPECTATION: Your baby's tongue should stay in contact with your finger, with the sides of their tongue cupping your finger like a taco

MY BABY

- Keeps their tongue in constant contact with my finger with the entire edge of the tongue cupping my finger like a taco
- Keeps their tongue in constant contact with my finger with only the side edges of the tongue cupping my finger like a taco
- Cups my finger with their tongue edges but the tongue comes off of my finger occasionally
- Cups my finger with their tongue edges but loses contact with my finger frequently
- Cannot cup my finger like a taco



**TONGUE
CUPPING**

PERISTALSIS ASSESSMENT

HOW TO: Insert your index finger (or pinky if you have large hands) pad side up into baby's mouth. Allow baby to suck on your finger while you assess the wave-like motions of their tongue

EXPECTATION: Your baby's tongue move in a rhythmic, wave-like pattern from their tongue tip to back

MY BABY

- Moves their tongue in a wave-like motion, with the wave originating at the tongue tip
- Moves their tongue in a wave-like motion, with the wave starting behind the tongue tip (Blade | Front | Center | Back)
- Moves their tongue in a piston-like motions (up and down) rather than wave-like motion
- Starts off in a wave-like motion but switches to a piston-like motion
- Moves their tongue in a wave-like motion, with the wave starting at the back of the tongue moving towards the tip



**TONGUE
PERISTALSIS**

Videos to demonstrate

Jaw Laxity, Tongue Push back, Cheek engagement

Lateralization, Tongue Cupping, Tongue Extension, Perastalsis

Bite Reflex

Gag reflex

Identifying Junction of Hard and Soft Palate

Hard Palate is made of Bone
and feels hard to the touch

The soft palate is squishy and soft



The Junction of the Hard/Soft Palate is where they meet and may feel like a ledge