

Myofascial Therapy

I. Definition:

Myofascial release (MFR) uses gentle, sustained pressure to release restrictions in the myofascial connective tissue of the body. For speech disorders, licensed practitioners focus on the oral-facial area, neck, and structures connected to speech production and swallowing.

Related interventions include laryngeal massage (for voice disorders), craniosacral therapy (often used for infants with feeding difficulties), and therapeutic speech massage. These methods aim to normalize muscle tone, improve range of motion, and reduce tension that may interfere with speech or swallowing function.

II. Who may benefit :

- ✓ Infants with feeding difficulties
- ✓ Babies with tongue tie (ankyloglossia) as an adjunct to medical treatment
- ✓ Children and adults with articulation disorders related to oral-motor tension
- ✓ Those with voice disorders caused by muscle tension (strongest evidence)
- ✓ Patients with stuttering related to physical tension
- ✓ Individuals with oral-motor disorders
- ✓ Adults with muscle tension dysphonia

III. Science's view :

Research is limited but growing. A 2017 systematic review in *Clinical Otolaryngology* found preliminary evidence that laryngeal massage and manual therapy can help patients with voice disorders, particularly muscle tension dysphonia. This represents the strongest evidence for massage interventions in speech-related conditions.

For other applications, evidence remains largely anecdotal. Clinical observations suggest craniosacral therapy and myofascial release may improve outcomes for infants with feeding difficulties when combined with traditional feeding therapy, but controlled studies demonstrating added benefit are lacking.

For infants with tongue tie (ankyloglossia), bodywork is often recommended alongside or following frenectomy procedures, though rigorous research on the specific benefits of bodywork in these cases is limited.

More controlled studies are needed to establish clear protocols and identify which patients benefit most from these interventions.

IV. Safety Considerations:

Work only with licensed practitioners (physical therapists, occupational therapists, or licensed massage therapists) who have specialized training in pediatric or speech-related techniques. Avoid practitioners making unsupported claims about “curing” developmental disorders through bodywork alone.

For infants, ensure the practitioner has specific certification in pediatric techniques and works collaboratively with your SLP or feeding therapist.