

RVMC MARIN FAMILY FAVORITES 2008 SURVEY

Compiled by Suzanne Skyvara and Linley Kaye

Welcome to RVMC's third annual survey of the best picks for families in Marin! Thank you to the 104 moms who took the time to complete the survey in February – we could not have done this without your recommendations!

Before jumping into the results, first some detail about RVMC members (although remember, this is only based on a section of the membership).

Where do we live?

San Anselmo	33%
San Rafael	24%
Kentfield	16%
Greenbrae	12%
Fairfax	9%
Ross	4%
Larkspur	1%
Tiburon	1%
Other	1%

The trend over the last three years has been for more RVMC members to have paid work. The number of stay-at-home moms has declined from 40% in 2006 to 37% this year. More members now work full time (20% this year up from 16% in 2006), less members work part-time (23% this year down from 31% in 2006) and more members work on a freelance basis (20% this year compared to 13% in 2006).

As for children, 48% have one child, 46% have two children, 4% have three children, one respondent has more than five children and another respondent is pregnant with her first child.

And now, the winners of the 2008 RVMC Marin Family Favorites survey are...

BEST KID-FRIENDLY TRAILS

1. Phoenix Lake – Ross

2.7 Mi., easy and scenic

Sir Francis Drake to Lagunitas to end at Natalie Coffin Greene Park. Free Parking.

Walk .2 mi. uphill to trail around lake starting at stairs at side of dam.

2. Tennessee Valley – Mill Valley

4 Mi. to end of trail and back. Gently winding trail open to hikers and bicyclists. Great place for viewing lots of wildlife.

In Mill Valley, take Tennessee Valley Road for 1.5 mi. until the road ends at the trailhead carpark.

3. Lake Lagunitas – Fairfax

< 2 Mi., easy, scenic

Sir Francis Drake to left at Alpha gas station, right on Broadway, left on Bolinas - Fairfax Rd., left on Sky Oaks to ranger station, follow signs to lake. \$ Parking. Trailhead by picnic area.

4. Crown Road – Kentfield to Mill Valley

5+ Mi., easy, scenic fire road, jogger stroller friendly

Sir Francis Drake to College to Woodland to Evergreen to left on Crown Rd. to end.

Trail spur options (not for strollers) off Crown Road: Hoo Koo ee Koo, Dawn Falls down to Baltimore Canyon.

BEST KID'S DENTIST

A clear Winner!

1. **Dr Gila Dorostkar**, for the third year running, swept the board as the favorite kid's dentist in Marin. 1321 S. Eliseo Drive, Greenbrae. Tel: 461-0414

Tie for second place

2. **Dr John Boland, III**. 770 Tampalpais Drive, Corte Madera. Tel: 927-7711

Dr Ladan Vakili. 1036 Sir Francis Drake, Kentfield. Tel: 454-6414

3. **Dr Martin Rayman**. 912 Grand Avenue, San Rafael. Tel: 459-1444

BEST PARK/PLAYGROUNDS IN MARIN

1. **San Anselmo Memorial Park** (also known as Millennium Playground). This popular park is the result of a huge community effort. The result is two divided areas – one for toddlers and one for big kids. Lots of slides, sand pits and swings, including a lounge swing that is very popular with moms. Located at San Francisco Boulevard and Veterans Place, San Anselmo.

2. **Corte Madera Town Park** (also known as "Pixley Park". Highly recommended enclosed playground with a space for toddlers and another space for older kids. A miniature 'road' encircles the area and is a great place for your little one to learn to ride a bike. Located at Pixley Avenue and Redwood Avenue, Corte Madera.

3. **Pixie Park**, a volunteer co-operative playground for children six and under, has lots of RVMC members. Located in Marin Art and Garden Center, 30 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, Ross. The park is unique in that it is gated requiring a key to get in and to get out, thereby ensuring that children will not leave without their parents' knowledge. The park has fun, safe play structures and swings for babies and bigger children, as well as a kitchen, bathroom, diaper changing area and beautiful trellises that shade picnic tables, big and small. For more information about how to become a member, visit www.pixiepark.org. The next opportunity to join will be in June.

4. **Peri Park**. This is a favorite gathering spot for moms groups. Different structures for different age groups so your child can grow with the park. Nice to stroll around to Fairfax Scoop afterwards for an ice cream or pick up your coffee at the Roastery before heading to the park. Located at Bolinas Avenue and Park, Fairfax.

Other frequent mentions were:

- o Harry B Allen Park ("Belvedere Park"), San Rafael Avenue & Community Road, Belvedere
- o Gerstle Park, San Rafael Avenue & Clark Street, San Rafael
- o Peacock Gap, Peacock Drive & Silk Oak Circle, San Rafael
- o Lansdale Park, Center Boulevard & San Anselmo Ave, San Anselmo

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For detailed information about all of these parks, including directions, visit the Marin Playgrounds website at www.justplaygrounds.com.

BEST SECOND-HAND CLOTHES/TOYS STORE

The very clear winner in this category is **Outgrown** in San Rafael. Outgrown is located at 1417 Fourth Street in San Rafael and carries everything from books and toys to furniture and an assortment of clothing. They also carry some new strollers (mostly joggers) and baby backpacks. Great for ski suits/jackets/pants and snow boots. Phone number is 457-2219.

In second place: **Play it Again Kids** in San Rafael. Play it Again Kids is located at 508 Fourth Street in San Rafael. Their phone number is 485-0304.

Also worth checking out:

- Wee Threads in Mill Valley located at 530 Miller Avenue.

Tel: 381-1700

- Merry Go Round is located at 401 Miller Avenue, Mill

Valley. Tel: 381-2535.

BEST CHILDREN'S PHOTOGRAPHER IN MARIN

There were only a handful of votes in this category. The winner is **Sears** (with three votes) at Northgate Mall, San Rafael. Tel: 507-2368.

Photographers with two votes each were:

Stephanie Mohan, 48 Bolinas Road, Fairfax. Tel: 454-2102

www.creativeportraiture.com

Joey McKay Photographs www.photographsbyjoey.com

Northgate Studios, Northgate Mall. Tel: 472-7401

Sasha Gulish, 1560 Fourth Street, San Rafael. Tel: 455-9343

www.sashagulish.com

Susannah Robbins who was nominated in last year's survey also got one vote this year. Tel: 382-7989. www.studiorobbins.com

There were 8 other photographers (not nominated last year) who each received one vote each.

Katherine Emery www.katherineemery.com

Cynthia Smalley www.smalleyphoto.com (based in LA but comes to Marin frequently)

Gina Risso www.ginarisso.com

Ruth Woodruff www.ruthwoodruff.com

Tom Stone www.tomstonegallery.com

Robin Fryday www.robinfryday.com

Geri Lavrov www.geriphotography.com

Lisa Knudson www.lisakphoto.com

BEST PLACE FOR KIDS' HAIRCUTS

The clear-cut winner: **Panda Room**. Two locations
132 Vintage Way, Novato. Tel: 892-2889 (stop by on a run to Costco)

127 Corte Madera Town Ctr, Corte Madera. Tel: 924-2288
(Across from REI.)

Runners-up:

Locks and Lollipops, 1563 Fourth Street, San Rafael. Tel: 457-5211

Children's Hair Club, 4176 Redwood Highway, San Rafael. Tel: 492-1000 (www.childrenshairclub.com)

BEST DAY OUTING

Hands down winner: **Bay Area Discovery Museum!**

The nationally recognized Bay Area Discovery Museum is a one-of-a-kind indoor/outdoor children's museum that offers a full range of programs for children, parents, school groups and educators. Located on seven and a half acres in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area at Fort Baker in Sausalito, CA, the Museum's unique programs feature hands-on art, science, environmental and media exhibitions, performances, special events and ongoing educational curricula.

Website: www.baykidsmuseum.org

Memberships available (and totally worth every penny)!

Other noteworthy recommendations (in order of popularity):

- o Traintown, Sonoma (combine with a picnic in Sonoma Square or pizza at the restaurant next door to Traintown)
- o Farmer's Market, San Rafael
- o Oakland Zoo
- o Stinson Beach
- o Exploratorium, San Francisco
- o Point Reyes
- o Ferry ride to the Farmer's Market at the Ferry Building, San Francisco

BEST SWIM LESSONS

Way ahead of other nominations: **Osher Marin Jewish**

Community Center (JCC) offers year-around swim instruction in their 88 degree indoor pool. Located at 200 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. The Splash! class is a parent/child swim class for age's 9-36 months. The First Fins class (age's 3-5 years) teaches gliding, floating, kicking and arm strokes. Lastly, the Strokes For Kids class (ages 5-9) helps children improve their stroke technique (breast, freestyle, back and fly). For more information contact **Cheryl Boissevain** at 415-444-8032 or e-mail cboissevain@marinjcc.org. You can also visit the JCC's website at www.marinjcc.org/fitness_aquatics_lessons.html

Second: **Mill Valley Community Center**. 180 Camino Alto, Mill Valley. Tel: 383-1370. www.millvalleycenter.org

Third: **Mark Anderson Aquatics**. Sleepy Hollow Pool, San Anselmo. Tel: 455-5952. www.sleepyhollowsealions.com

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BEST SOCCER PROGRAM

1. **Soccer Kids** (with Coach Jamie scored the most votes with RMVC moms by a long shot. Tel: 608-2608. www.soccerkids.com. Offers sessions across Marin, including San Anselmo, San Rafael, Corte Madera, Larkspur and Mill Valley.
2. **San Anselmo Parks and Recreation's Coach Tim**. 1000 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, San Anselmo. Tel: 258-4640. www.sananselmochamber.org
3. **Dave Fromer**. 147 Elm Avenue, Mill Valley. Tel: 383-0320. www.davefromersoccer.com

BEST DANCE PROGRAM

Ties for first place and second place:

1. **Dance Theatre Seven**. 56 Bolinas Road, Fairfax. Tel: 456-1590 www.dancetheatre7.com. According to one member, the Creative Movement class is for pre-K and is taught by the owner who is wonderful with children. Stapleton School of Performing Arts. 118 Greenfield Avenue, San Anselmo. Tel: 454-5759. www.stapletonschool.org
2. **Marin Ballet Theatre** www.marinballet.org
Just Dance www.justdance.biz

Also mentioned were:

- Luna Kids Dance**. Class held in San Anselmo. www.lunakidsdance.com
Brosnan School of Irish Dance. www.brosnanschool.com

BEST ART PROGRAM

1. **Doodlebug** wins the top prize and is obviously much-loved by RVMC moms. 641 San Anselmo Avenue, San Anselmo. Tel: 456-5989. www.doodlebugmarin.com
2. **Busy Little Hands**. New to the survey this year. www.busylittlehands.biz

Other programs mentioned:

- Art Start**. www.artstart-marin.com
"Art is Happening". 46 Florence Avenue, San Anselmo. (Judy Dombush.) Tel: 456-4602
Paint, Glue & Glitter. Fairfax/San Anselmo Parks and Recreation. www.townofsananselmo.org
Art Abloom www.artabloom.com
"Art is Happening". 46 Florence Avenue, San Anselmo. (Judy Dornbush.) Tel: 456-4602

BEST GYMNASTICS CLASS

Gold Medal Recommendation! **San Anselmo's Recreation Center** Tumbling Class led by Juan. 1000 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, San Anselmo. Tel: 258-4640. www.townofsananselmo.org

2. **Little Gym**. 170 Donahue Street, Sausalito. www.tlgsouthmarinca.com
3. **Marin Elite Gymnastics Academy (MEGA)**. 72 Woodland Avenue, San Rafael. Tel:257-MEGA www.megagymnastics.com

BEST MUSIC PROGRAM

Garnering a symphony of votes, **Music Together** is a music program for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergartners, and care giving adults. Everyone loves their time with Beth and classes get booked up quickly. The classes meet once a week for 10 weeks (each class is 45 minutes) in the fall, winter, and spring and six weeks in the summer. Your tuition includes professionally recorded CDs for your home and car, and illustrated songbook, and a "Music and Your Child" guide for parents and caregivers. Classes are located in Corte Madera, Fairfax, Larkspur, Marinwood, Mill Valley, Ross, San Anselmo, and San Rafael. Tel: 388-2464. www.music4families.com

2. **Kindermusik with Melissa**. www.kindermusik.com
3. **Music For Children** www.musicforchildrenca.com
4. **Music Makers**. 240 Tiburon Boulevard, Tiburon. Tel: 461-1066. www.music-makers.org

BEST LIBRARY'S CHILDREN'S SECTION IN MARIN

Very close voting with four libraries tying for third place:

1. **San Rafael**, 1100 E Street, San Rafael. Tel: 485-3323
Check out their website for special library kids' events, such as winter pajama story time, story times in Spanish, and much, much more. www.srkidslibrary.org/
2. **Mill Valley**, 375 Throckmorton Avenue, Mill Valley. Tel: 389-4292
Preschool Story time (ages 3-5) Wed. 10:30 – 11:00am
Toddler Story time (ages 2-3) Thur.10:15 - 10:45am
Lap sit Story time (under 2) Thur. 11:15 - 11:35am
Check website for any changes to schedule. www.millvalleylibrary.org
3. **Tiburon/Belvedere**, 1501 Tiburon Blvd., Tiburon. Tel: 789-BOOK (2665)
Check website for a detailed list of story time schedules. Many of their story times require registration, so please call ahead. www.bel-tib-lib.org
3. **Corte Madera**, 707 Meadow Sweet Drive, Corte Madera. Tel: 924-6382
Toddler story time (ages 2-3) Wed. 10:00 - 10:30am (Sept. to May)
Preschool story time (ages 3& up) Wed. 11:00 - 11:30am
Afternoon story time (ages 5-8) Tues. 3:30 - 4:00 pm (Sept. to Apr.)
3. **Fairfax**, 2097 Sir Francis Drake, Fairfax. Tel: 453-8151
Children's story time (ages 3 & up) Sat. 11:00 - 11:30am
Preschool story time (ages 3-5) Tues. 11:00 - 11:30am

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3. **San Anselmo**, 110 Tunstead Ave., San Anselmo. Tel: 258-4656

Check website for story time. Some sessions require registration www.townofsananselmo.org/library/

To find out more about libraries in Marin, check out the MARINet website at www.marinet.info/

BEST LOW-COST ACTIVITY (UNDER \$10) TO DO WITH YOUR CHILDREN IN MARIN

Hiking was, once again the stand-out favorite low-cost activity of all the active moms out there! San Rafael Farmers Market (coupled with feeding the ducks and having a picnic at the nearby playground) was another popular pick. The Bay Area Discovery Museum (especially if you have membership) also got nominated several times in this category as well.

Parks were also a popular option with special mention going to Terra Linda Water Park for hot days.

Many moms love a day trip to one of the fabulous beaches. The favorites included Stinson, Limatour and Heart's Desire beaches.

The Fairfax Pavilion indoor play program also rated several mentions.

BEST KID-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT IN MARIN

For the third year running, **Easy Street Café** took top honors as the best kid-friendly restaurant in Marin.

1. **Easy Street Café**, Two locations: Red Hill Shopping Center in San Anselmo and 574 Magnolia Ave, Larkspur. Easy Street Cafe is a family-oriented restaurant specializing in lunch and breakfast that was opened in Larkspur in 1984. Reasonable prices and good-sized portions are second to the play area full of toys as top feature.

2. **California Pizza Kitchen**, 347 Corte Madera Town Centre, Corte Madera. Tel: 945-0401

Offers deservedly renowned pizzas that suit the pickiest of palates as well as varieties more appealing to adults. Service is fast (great with little ones) and friendly. Its location means that it can get crowded at lunchtimes and early dinner when families stream in from shopping. Kid's menu is more extensive than the standard one offered in seemingly every restaurant and includes healthier options like chicken breast and sides of salad and fruit.

3. **Iron Springs Brewery**, 765 Center Boulevard, Fairfax. Tel: 485-1005

A casual dining spot that makes all of its handcrafted beers and sodas. They offer a variety of dishes including burgers, salads and large plate dinners. A kids menu is offered and on Tuesdays one kid eats free with each paying adult.

4. **Yankee Pier**, 286 Magnolia Ave, Larkspur. Tel: 924-7676
Casual and intimate, this quaint New England-style eatery is set in a small yellow house that seats about 50 people, with room

for another couple dozen on the front and back porches. Very popular, this is a relatively small ("cozy" in reviews) restaurant specializing in seafood. You can't make reservations so be aware that there can be a wait if you arrive during peak times. Offers all-you-can-eat fish and chips on Monday's (described as the "best in the area" by the San Francisco Chronicle). And they have a sandbox for kids to play in before, during and after dinner.

4. **Taco Jane's**, 21 Tamalpais Ave, San Anselmo. Tel: 454-6562
Fun, colorful and casual, this local favorite is tucked away on a side street and has both an outdoor and indoor section. Great Mexican food with something for even the pickiest of palettes.

BEST MOM & BABY/TODDLER CLASS IN MARIN

1. **Side by Side** at the JCC, 200 N. San Pedro Road, San Rafael. Tel: 444-8000

E-mail: info@marinjcc.org

Ages 18 months-3 years (with parent)

Introduce young ones to group experience in a nursery school setting. With a parent or guardian at their side, kids learn to play both cooperatively and independently. Each day offers a balance of structured and unstructured play as children encounter all the elements of a traditional nursery school curriculum: art, language, music, movement and dramatic play, Jewish holidays and Jewish culture. Activities encourage positive interactions between parents and children and stimulate discussions between the adults. Families need not be Jewish to attend.

2. **Gymboree**, 406 Strawberry Village Shopping Center, Mill Valley. Tel: 383-9771

Cost: Prices vary depending on class selected

Designed for children between the ages of 0 to 5 years. Classes are tailored to the age and development of your child. For more details, see www.playandmusic.com.

3. **Jumping Jacks**, run by the San Rafael Community Services. www.cityofsanrafael.org

Jumping Jacks is an hour-long class that consists of activities that encourage creative movement, balance and hand-eye coordination. These activities are done in a high-energy, fun-filled atmosphere. Jump-up (for children crawling to 22 months) class is from 9:30 - 10:30am, High Jump (for children 23 months to 3 years) is from 10:30 - 11:30am. Fees: 6 classes for \$54, 12 classes for \$96. Drop-in fee is \$10. 25% sibling discounts available.

BEST PLACE TO PURCHASE KIDS' BIRTHDAY CAKE IN MARIN

Lots of tempting recommendations here:

1. **Safeway** - Many locations to serve you in Marin. One member said that a birthday cake for a one year old is free.

2. **Costco**, Vintage Oaks Mall, Novato. 899-1330

3. **Sweet Things Bakery**, The Cove, 1 Blackfield Drive, off Tiburon Blvd. Tiburon. 388-8583

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4. Baskin Robbins

- o 596 Magnolia Avenue, Larkspur. 924-3786
- o 1769 Grant Avenue, Novato. 897-9862
- o 29 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley. 388-9897
- o 909 B Street, San Rafael. 456-1450

5. **United Market Bakery**, 515 3rd Street, San Rafael. Tel: 454-8912 or 100 Red Hill Avenue, San Anselmo.

Alternatively, make your own! For great ideas on party themes and cakes, go to www.birthdaypartyideas.com. Also, just try searching for specific cakes such as "dinosaur cake" or "dora cake" and you should find lots of ideas for every type of baker, from complete amateur to aspiring Martha.

BEST BIRTHDAY PARTY ENTERTAINER

Two musicians topped the list for Best Birthday Party Entertainer:

1. **Susan Zelinsky**, or "**Susan Z**", is a San Rafael-based singer, songwriter, musician and actor. She has performed at The Fillmore, Great American Music Hall, Slims, Bimbo's, Freight and Salvage, Sweetwater Saloon, and numerous other Bay Area venues. Ongoing appearances include Dixie Park on Tuesdays at 10:15am and she will perform at the Fairfax Festival on June 14. In addition to her kid and adult CDs, Susan Z has produced a series of signing CDs, "Sign, Sing and Play". Susan Z can be reached at susan.zelinsky@comcast.net. www.susanz.com.
2. **Tim Cain** is the ever-popular sing-a-long performer that kids in the Bay Area and beyond have loved for years. In addition to producing numerous CDs for kids, Tim performs frequently at various Bay Area locations, including Pottery Barn Kids at Corte Madera, local libraries, and a number of festivals and fairs. For a full list of performances dates and contact information, visit <http://www.timcain.com/>.

Other birthday entertainers recommended include:

- o The Bubble Lady (Rebecca Nile): <http://www.bubblesandclowns.com/>
- o Sharon "Heron" Barnett www.marinnature.com
- o Magician Dick Newton: <http://dicknewtonmagic.com/>
- o JAMaROO Kids: <http://www.jamarookids.com/>
- o Singer Ali Weiss: <http://www.minimusicparties.com>
- o Musician James K: <http://www.jamesk.com/>
- o Princess Polka Dot: <http://www.princesspolkadot.com/>
- o Entertainers Sandi & Stevie: <http://www.sandiandstevie.com/>
- o The Original Professional Princesses: <http://www.magicprincess.com/>

Another good place to find ideas for entertainers is in the Birthday Party Guide section on www.marinmommies.com.

BEST BABYSITTING SOURCE IN MARIN

The number one recommendation was **Craig's List** (www.craigslist.org). You can either post an ad seeking people or you can look through the childcare section for people looking for babysitting opportunities. You can focus your search on the Nothbay or even your town. As always, be sure to check references carefully.

Next best source is **RVMC** and the group email list on Big Tent. You can find out about babysitters who have been tested by other families and who are comfortable with infants and small children.

Other ways to find the all-important babysitter:

- o Rent-A-Parent in Tiburon
- o Marin Childcare Council
- o Daycare teachers (with the added benefit that they know your child already)
- o Create your own babysitting co-op
- o Sittercity.com
- o Town & Country

BEST CAMPING IN MARIN

No contest here, the winning location to set up camp is **Samuel P. Taylor National Park**. It's only 15 minutes drive from San Anselmo which means you can quickly get back home if you need to. It's very popular so make sure you stay on top of when reservations open up. You need to book at least six months in advance. Take bikes with you as there is a great road to explore on two wheels (but watch out for speedy adult cyclists as they come racing through).

Other camps mentioned:

- o Coast Camp, Point Reyes
- o China Camp
- o Olema Ranch Campground

And further a field:

- o Yosemite (again needs to be booked six months in advance and for popular dates, make sure you are booking at 7 am in the morning when the sites open up)
- o Big Sur
- o Standish Hickey
- o Mendocino County
- o Costanoa



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BEST OB/GYN IN MARIN

Two doctors tied for best OB/GYN in Marin:

Dr. David Galland: one member shared that two nurses referred to Dr. Galland as the “closest thing you can get to a doctor being a midwife in Marin”

5 Bon Air Road, Suite 177, Larkspur. Tel: 924-9770

Dr. Lizellen LaFollette:

250 Bon Air Road, Greenbrae. Tel: 884-1840

Other OB/GYNs highly recommended by members include:

Dr. Nona Cunningham (Womens Medical Associates)

1260 S. Eliseo Dr., Greenbrae. Tel: 461-7800

Dr. Brian Demuth

1000 S. Eliseo Dr., Greenbrae. Tel: 464-0184

BEST PEDIATRICIAN IN MARIN

Based on the distribution of votes for Best Pediatrician in Marin, many members are happy with and recommend their pediatrician. The pediatricians that top the list include:

Dr. Kara Ornstein (Marin Pediatric Associates): 1100 S. Eliseo Dr., Greenbrae. Tel: 461-8828

Dr. Kathryn Sexton: 1000 S. Eliseo Dr., Greenbrae. Tel: 461-5436

Dr. Nelson Branco: 250 Bon Air Road, Greenbrae. Tel: 925-7592

Dr. Stewart Rowe (Greenbrae Pediatrics): 599 Sir Francis Drake Blvd. #10, Greenbrae. Tel: 461-0440

Dr. Camille Brown (San Rafael Pediatrics), 750 Las Gallinas Ave., Suite 210, San Rafael. Tel: 479-7244

TONGUE-TIE

Tongue-tie, also known as ankyloglossia, is a condition in babies and children who have a short or taut lingual frenulum at birth -- the piece of skin that joins the tongue to the floor of the mouth. The tongue then remains anchored to the bottom of the mouth, restricting movement. This prevents the ability to protrude the tongue past the lower lip. As a result, infants and children with tongue-tie may experience speech or eating problems, such as difficulty with breastfeeding. The etiology is unknown but it can run in families.

Babies with tongue-tie may experience problems with breastfeeding because they are unable to “latch on” to their mother’s nipple or cause extreme discomfort for the nursing mother. Some breastfeeding mothers may not realize that tongue-tie is the underlying cause. In severe cases, this may cause feeding problems and poor weight gain. If you experience trouble breastfeeding with your baby, it is important that you have an evaluation for tongue-tie. Lactation consultants are very familiar with this problem and can make this assessment.

The tongue is also a very important muscle involved in speaking. For many children with tongue-tie, the tongue is able to compensate and they will not experience any speech impediments. However, some children’s speech will be affected by the condition. Around the ages of two, speech problems may become noticeable. If you do have concerns about your child’s articulation, it is important to bring this up to your pediatrician who may refer you to a speech pathologist.

For older children, tongue tie may be associated with inability to lick an ice cream cone, play a wind instrument, or French-kiss.

In some instances, tongue-tie does not require treatment. However, if your baby is experiencing feeding difficulties, or your toddler is experiencing speech problems, a simple and effective surgery, also known as frenuloplasty, may be recommended. Risks of frenuloplasty are very low but may include pain, bleeding or infection. The technique used for the procedure depends on your child’s age.

For young babies, the procedure can be performed without a general anesthetic. During the procedure, your baby’s head is held and the frenulum is simply snipped with surgical scissors in the office. After the operation, your baby will be able to breastfeed right away, though advice from a lactation consultant may still be needed.

For older children, a general anesthetic is usually required. Stitches are usually placed and it may take a few weeks for the mouth to heal completely.

Breastfeeding can be an exhausting and frustrating experience for new moms. Tongue tie is easy to identify and treat if it is felt to be contributing and allow Mom and her baby to have a more positive bonding experience in those early weeks.

By Kristina W. Rosbe, MD, a pediatric otolaryngologist and RVMC mom of two who has offices in San Francisco and Marin.

