

What is a tongue thrust?

A tongue thrust is known by many names—reverse or immature swallow, orofacial muscle dysfunction, or deviant swallow pattern. All of these refer to the resting posture of the tongue against the teeth and the pushing of the tongue against the teeth during a swallow. Experts estimate that we swallow 500 to 1000 times a day with between 4 and 8 pounds of pressure per swallow. This constant pressure pushes the teeth out of place, causing an abnormal bite known as *malocclusion*.

Why does tongue thrust happen?

There are several possible causes of tongue thrust including allergies, enlarged tonsils, a short lingual frenulum, and neurological, muscular, or structural abnormalities such as a high, narrow palate. Tongue thrust often develops as a result of sucking habits relating to the thumbs, fingers, or pacifiers.

Symptoms can include mouth breathing with a lips apart posture, forward hanging tongue at rest, and pushing of the tongue against either the anterior (front) or lateral (sides) of the teeth when swallowing.



Should I be concerned about a tongue thrust?

That constant, improperly placed pressure of the tongue over time can cause significant problems with a person's dental health, speech, and cosmetic appearance. Misalignment of the teeth (malocclusion) can also cause patients to become more susceptible to periodontal disease or "gum disease." Malocclusion also can cause "jaw joint" problems, facial pain, difficulty biting or chewing food, and excessive grinding of the teeth (bruxing).

A tongue thrust may cause difficulty with forming sounds of normal speech and may present in the form of a lisp and/or other misarticulations.

In addition, a person who swallows incorrectly will often purse and tighten the muscles of the cheeks, chin, and lips – a symptom known as a facial grimace. Over time, this can cause long term changes to the structure of the face.

What can I do about a tongue thrust?

Effectively correcting a tongue thrust requires an interdisciplinary approach. The best results are almost always achieved by working with a team of experts that may include an orthodontist, a dentist, and a speech therapist trained in orofacial myofunctional therapy. Even with the work of an orthodontist and dentist to correct problems that have already occurred, the habit at the root of the issue must be addressed to prevent further complications and promote long-term success with your orthodontic investments.

Through programs such as "Tongue Tips", therapists work to re-train the muscles of the face and tongue for proper posture within the mouth and to correct the swallowing motion. Although consistent commitment is necessary for success, many patients are able to simply and effectively eliminate the long-term problems associated with of a tongue thrust – and enjoy renewed health and self-confidence. These kind of results make it therapy that's "easy to swallow".

To learn more about the Tongue Tips-A Tongue Thrust Remediation Program, please contact Deanna Ashkeboussi at

deanna.slp.tst@gmail.com

240.731.7516

Tongue rests
on the top of
your mouth

simon says

Breathe
through
your nose

Keep
your
lips closed

Sit up
Straight