

**CranioSacral Therapy (CST) a type of BodyWork (baby massage)** is a hands-on gentle therapy used to assist the body in releasing tension and restrictions that are irritating or interfering with proper movement. The term comes from *cranium* (skull, face, jaw bones), and *sacrum* (tailbone); together they surround and protect the brain and spinal cord.

The craniosacral (CS) system consists of the cranium, spine, and sacrum, all the membranes attached to these bones, and the fluid that bathes and nourishes the brain and spinal cord. There is a rhythm in the CS system, just like the rhythms of a beating heart and breathing lungs. The CS rhythm can be felt throughout the body. It is transmitted through the fascia, a web-like biological fabric that holds all our body parts in place and allows for movement between them. Using a very light touch, the practitioner evaluates the body's CS system to find if there are areas of tension or restriction, then works with the body's natural healing ability to release the restrictions promoting healthier state and function.

Successful breastfeeding for baby requires the mouth and tongue to move through a series of complex movements in a very coordinated manner. The coordination of suck, swallow and breath during nursing is controlled by 3 main nerves (cranial nerves) that go from the brain through the skull to the mouth. The path of these nerves are subject to a lot of pressure during skull molding and passage of the head and shoulders during birth.

The birth process can cause tension or strain in the baby's cranium or body that does not always release on its own. This strain on the body may affect muscle and joint movement, blood flow, nerve messages, and overall function of the strained area. This results in compensating movements. For example, if you've ever had a strain, pinched nerve, or even a cut on your finger, all the ways you move and hold your body differently to protect that area is called compensation. The strain of birth, particularly when it is difficult, very fast, utilizes drugs, vacuum, or forceps, or a c-section delivery, is likely to contribute to breastfeeding difficulties for the infant.

A breastfeeding challenge may be caused as the 'inborn knowing' of how to feed is physically altered either by being physically restricted (tongue tie, lip tie), altered with compensation due to strain or injury from birth or intrauterine positioning, or a combination of tie and strain. If there is a tight frenum of the lip and/or tongue, the limitation of movement may require a release. However, strained tissues and interference of the nerves also cause similar breastfeeding problems. In many cases, both forms of restrictions exist so both a surgical release and BodyWork such as CST are recommended.