

## Biting Factsheet



Young children bite for many different reasons, from teething to seeing what reaction it will provoke. Many children between the ages of 1 and 3 go through a biting phase which they eventually outgrow.

If a baby is teething, make sure to always have a cool teething ring or washcloth on hand so he or she will be less likely to sink teeth into someone's arm.

Observe the child closely so that you become aware of the situations in which the child may bite. Make sure that all of the child's needs – including having a drink, eating and nap time, are taken care of.

Distraction - Many young children can be diverted from inappropriate behaviour by giving them focused attention or turning their attention to something else. This can often be successful when diverting them to something that they are particularly interested in or a particular favourite toy or resource.

As the child gets older try to encourage the use of words ('I'm upset') instead of biting. A successful strategy for children who do not yet have the verbal skills to express their feelings might include tightly hugging a stuffed toy.

Sometimes, shortening activities or giving the child a break can help prevent the rising frustration/excitement that can lead to biting and other bad behaviors.

Give the child your time throughout the session so he or she doesn't bite just to get attention. Extra attention is especially important when a child is going through a major life change, such as a move or welcoming a baby sibling. If a child is prone to biting, keep an eye on any playmates and immediately step in when altercation appears to be brewing.

When a child bites, let them child know that this behavior is not acceptable by saying, "We don't bite." Explain that biting hurts the other person. Then remove the child from the situation and give them time to calm down.

Feelings are very hard for young children to control. You might say something like "You were very cross when Peter took your truck, but you must not bite him" or "You wanted to play with the truck. If you feel cross tell me and I will help you, but we don't bite".

Don't forget that ALL children need support – the child who has been bitten will need comforting – it is a frightening experience and the adult should spend plenty of time with the child and remain close to them. The child who has bitten may also be frightened and/or upset by their actions. Remain close by and remember to praise any positive behaviour.

It is important to record any incidents and for an appropriate staff member to contact the respective parents to inform them of the incident. A courtesy call to the parents of the child who was bitten should be made and an Incident and Accident record completed for when parents arrive at the nursery to sign.

The Management Team should also spend some time with the parent/carer of the child who bit to try and ascertain if there any possible triggers/reasons for the behaviour. It is important to work in partnership with the family. Strategies can be discussed and agreed upon – they are much more likely to prove successful if the child is receiving the same messages in both the home and nursery environment.

***Remember – whilst biting can be a very upsetting 'phase' of development that some children go through – it is a stage that will disappear with the correct support.***