

## Understanding Biting in Child Care

Biting is a behavior that we commonly see in the life of the toddler. We feel that it is important to bring more information about biting and let you know what we are doing to find a solution.

The issue of children biting other children is a common and difficult behavior, especially in child care. Often times it occurs without warning or provocation and brings about strong emotional responses in the biter, victim, all parents, and caregivers involved. Biting is a normal behavior for children in the toddler stage. As parents, we think of it as a primal act of aggression, but it's very common for a toddler to bite.

### Why do Children Bite?

- Teething
- To explore their world
- Frustration
- Lack language skills to express emotions
- Self-defense
- To get attention



Biting is usually a short phase that many children go through and often disappears when the child gains more language skills. In the meantime, it can be very frustrating. Children who give biting a try learn quickly that it works. It gains an immediate response from the child being bitten and care providers. It's the job of all parents and caregivers to work together towards preventing biting and giving toddlers acceptable ways to express themselves and be kind to others. It is important for caregivers and parents to remain calm, respond quickly and consistently, and help the child find the words to express their feelings.

### How is Biting Handled in Child Care?

We are focused on ensuring the safety of all the children we care for. We have found the following practices to be helpful in working with children who have been bitten and who are biting. When a child bites another, we immediately focus on the child who has been bitten. We wash the area and apply an ice pack as we comfort the child. We talk about what has happened and acknowledge that biting hurts! We give hugs and rock until the child feels better and is ready to go back and play. We also help the children practice standing up for themselves, telling us when there is a problem with a friend, and when they are bitten to tell the person, "No biting, biting hurts!"

The child who has bitten is removed from the area, is told, "No biting, biting hurts," and takes a break to relax and regain control of their behavior. The child then is directed to another area of play. Depending on the severity of the bite (breaking of the skin), we will fill out an

incident report for both sets of parents. We will not let you know the name of the children who are involved. This is important to promote confidentiality in our child care. Knowing who the child is will only result in parents feeling awkward around one another at pick up time, or having parents feel upset with a particular child, neither of which will help solve the problem. Parents of both the child who was bitten and the child who did the biting will be contacted, either by phone or at pick-up time.

When biting becomes more frequent, we will chart the incidents to attempt to find a pattern in the behavior, shadow the child to both prevent biting, and help them practice social skills within the group. We are committed to working with the family of the child who has been bitten and the child who is biting to bring an end to the behavior while keeping all of the children safe and comfortable in our child care. We feel that letting a child go for behavior issues only passes the problem on to another child care and we will do our best to find a solution with the parents.

We understand the frustration and strong emotions that biting brings in parents. We feel it, too. We just want to let you all know that we are aware of the situation and are committed to find a solution. The safety of children in our child care is our biggest concern. If you have any questions at all, please, please give me a call and we can chat or set up a conference after hours. Thank you for your patience.

## Articles for Further Reading for all Parents

\*Why do Toddlers Bite? Find the Right Response. Zerotothree.org

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/chew-on-this-resources-on-biting.html>

\*What to do about biting? Missouri Families.org

<http://missourifamilies.org/features/parentingarticles/parenting1.htm>

\*How to Stop Your Child From Biting. Webmd.com

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/guide/stop-children-from-biting>

\*Biting. Kidshealth.org

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/stop\\_biting.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/stop_biting.html)

\*Teaching Your Child Not to Bite. Parenting.com

<http://www.parents.com/toddlers-preschoolers/discipline/improper-behavior/teaching-child-not-to-bite/>