

# **Biting policy**

Biting is fairly common amongst young children and it is one of the things that concerns adults the most. Biting is often very painful and frightening for the child who is bitten. It can also be frightening for the child who bites, because it upsets the child and makes adults very angry. Biting can make the child who bites feel very powerful because of the strong reaction that it brings. This power can be frightening for the children because they need to feel secure that their feelings can be controlled. It happens for different reasons with different children and under different circumstances. The first step in learning to control it is to look at why it may be happening.

## **1 Why children bite**

### **1.1 Exploration:**

Babies and toddlers learn by touching, smelling, hearing and tasting. If you give a baby a toy, one of the first places it goes to is the mouth. Tasting or "mouthing" objects is something that all children do. Young children do not always understand the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone.

### **1.2 Teething:**

Children begin teething around the ages of four to seven months. Swelling gums can be tender and can cause a great deal of discomfort. Babies sometimes find relief from this discomfort by chewing on something. Sometimes the object they chew is a real person! Children this age do not truly understand the difference between chewing on a person or a toy.

### **1.3 Cause and effect:**

Around the age of 12 months, babies become interested in finding out what happens when they do something. When they bang a spoon on the table, they discover that it makes a loud sound. When they drop a toy from their cot, they discover that it falls. They may also discover that when they bite someone, they get a reaction.

### **1.4 Attention:**

Older toddlers may sometimes bite to get attention. When children are in situations where they feel that they are not receiving enough attention they often find a way to make others sit up and take notice. Being ignored is not fun! Biting is a quick way to become the centre of attention - even if it is negative attention.

### **1.5 Imitation:**

Older toddlers love to imitate others. Watching others and trying to do what they do is a great way to learn things. Some children see others bite and decide to try it out themselves.

### **1.6 Independence:**

Toddlers are trying so hard to be independent - "mine" and "me do it" are favourite words. Learning to do things independently, making choices, and needing control over a situation are part of growing up. Biting is a powerful way to control others. If you want a toy or want a playmate to leave you alone or move out of your way, it is a quick way to get what you want.

### **1.7 Frustration:**

Young children experience a lot of frustration. Growing up is a struggle. Drinking from a cup is great, yet nursing or sucking from a bottle is also wonderful. Sometimes it would be nice to remain a baby! Toddlers do not always have good control over their bodies. A loving pat sometimes turns into a push. Toddlers cannot always express themselves. They sometimes experience difficulty in asking for things or requesting help. They have not yet learned how to interact with others. At times, when they are unable to find the words to express their feelings, they resort to hitting, pushing, or biting.

### **1.8 Stress:**

A child's world can be stressful too. A lack of interesting things to do, or insufficient interaction with adults is stressful situations for children. Children also experience traumatic events in their lives, such as bereavement, moving to a new home, or even starting a new nursery. Biting is one way to express feelings and relieve tension. Young children are not always able to fully understand what they are feeling, they just act.

## **2 What we can do**

### **2.1 Use the setting, trigger, action and response method to pinpoint the problem: (star chart)**

- Where was the child?
- What happened before or after? How was the situation handled?
  - When did the biting occur?
  - What was the response?

## **2.2 Try prevention:**

If you determine that the biting occurs as the result of exploration or teething you may want to provide the child with a teething ring.

If the child seems to bite when tired or hungry, you may want to look at your daily routine to be sure that they are getting enough sleep and nourishment

Try to keep group play to short periods and small groups. Watch for situations where two children might want the same toy. For example, if the biting occurs when two children are fighting over a toy telephone, you may want to purchase a second one or perhaps try to distract them before a potential biting situation arises. It is not always possible to make very young children share. Toddlers do not necessarily have the skills to negotiate or understand another child's perspective.

Children in this situation need close adult supervision, especially if they are known to bite. However even the best supervision, unless it is one-to-one, will not prevent some children from getting bitten.

If attention seems to be the main reason for biting, try to spend time with the child and praise them when they are doing more positive things. If the child is experiencing a stressful family or care giving situation, you will want to make everyday life as supportive and normal as possible. Predictable meals and bedtimes and extra time with a loving adult can help. Often, experiences like rolling, squishing, and pounding play dough or relaxing, splashing and playing in water are a great way to relieve tension.

If a child has been bitten whilst in the setting, and a mark is left will contact the parents to make them aware before finding out on collection.

