

CHILDCARE CONNECTION

BITING

Biting is a common behavior often seen in children under 3-years-old, especially in childcare settings. Children may bite for a variety of reasons, such as coping with challenges or fulfilling a need. While biting is typical at certain developmental stages, it poses a safety concern that caregivers should discourage from the very first incident.

Information retrieved from: [Biting in Child Care](#) | [Toddler Biting: Finding the Right Response](#) | [ZERO TO THREE: Understanding and Responding to Children Who Bite](#) | [NAEYC](#)

Why do young children bite?

- To express difficult feelings.
- To satisfy oral-motor stimulation.
- To explore cause and effect.
- To act in self-defense.
- To feel strong and in control.
- To communicate needs and desires.
- Instinctively due to lack of self-control.
- To soothe discomfort from teething.

How to handle biting?

Remain calm and respond to children on their level.

1. In a firm voice (not angry or yelling) say: "No biting. Biting hurts". Use a simple, clear statement, to acknowledge the other child's feelings. When appropriate, offer a choice such as helping comfort the child or sitting quietly until you have tended to the other child.
2. Comfort and tend to the child who was bitten.
3. Talk to the child who did the biting. Remain calm and use simple language. Reinforce the rule and, when appropriate, model positive alternatives for future situations.
4. Redirect both children to another activity.
5. Document the incident according to your policies and procedures.



Classroom Strategies and Resources for Biting

- ◆ **Identify and reduce triggers:** Watch for patterns and document when and why biting incidents occur. Create a calm environment that is not overstimulating. Use visual and auditory cues to aid in transitions to reduce stress.
- ◆ **Teach social and emotional skills:** Encourage sharing and turn-taking, and model positive communication. Help children label their emotions and provide alternative solutions to challenges. Ensure your quiet area includes calming tools for self-regulation.
- ◆ **Watch closely during risky times:** Position adults near children who might bite during busy times. Use small groups to offer more attention and prevent problems.
- ◆ **Build a calm and predictable space:** Follow consistent routines so children know what to expect, set simple rules with reminders, and offer sensory tools to safely meet oral stimulation needs.
- ◆ **Work together with families:** Communicate with parents and guardians in a kind, supportive manner. Collaborate on strategies that work both at home and in child care settings, and share helpful resources if concerns arise.

Professional Development Opportunities Focused on Biting

[Biting Behaviors and Positive Guidance](#); [Take the Sting out of Biting—The Administrator's Role in Stopping Biting Before it Starts](#)



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CONTACT US: childcare@gov.bm

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