



Children and Biting

Biting between children can be very frustrating for the children, parents and caregivers. Biting is very common with children who are ages 14 months to 3 years old. Children usually go through a biting phase which usually disappears when they learn to express themselves by using their words. Biting cannot always be prevented between children who are learning to communicate with each other. The most effective way to teach a child who is biting that it is not appropriate behavior is to be consistent in your reaction as the caregiver. Please know that if your child is biting or is a recipient of bites from other children, we are doing our best to prevent any biting behaviors in our classrooms. Our school follows policies and procedures when it comes to biting between children so that we can create a safe learning environment for all children.

Why do children bite?

- Children may bite because they are exploring their world. They are watching to see what reaction they will get from the child they have bitten and/or their parent or caregiver.
- Children may bite because they are teething. Teething causes discomfort inside the child's mouth that is often relieved by biting.
- Children may bite to seek attention from the parent, caregiver or the child they have bitten.
- At this age, children are learning how to become independent. They may bite because they want a toy or they want another child to leave a certain area.
- Frustration is a key cause of biting. Children may be angry or upset and may bite in response to a frustrating situation with another child. They may resort to biting, hitting, kicking or some other physical harm because they do not have the ability to express their feelings in a more appropriate way.
- Children may bite when they are faced with a difficult and stressful situation including divorce, death, illness, the start of a new school, a new caregiver in their classroom, etc.

What to do when children bite:

There are several things that we do here at school in response to biting situations. We try our best to prevent biting incidents, but when they occur we have found that our response to the situation is very important. We strive for consistency and routine when it comes to biting. Following are some of what we do when a bite occurs and what we do to prevent biting situations.

- We firmly tell the child, "Biting is not okay. It hurts our friend's body". We try to show the injury to the child who has bitten and explain to him/her that it hurts.
- We encourage the child to use his/her words instead of biting. We use this opportunity to explore a more appropriate way to express feelings and encourage the child to do this next time. For example, if a child was bitten because he/she took a toy from a friend, we may explain to the child who bit that in the future instead of biting he/she may say, "Please do not take my toy. I am using that and you may have it when I am finished".
- Observing the situation and finding out if there was conflict between two children is important. Sometimes situations that create conflict between the children can be prevented. If there is a pattern, we try to guide the children to avoid the situation in the future.
- If the child seems to be biting in response to teething, we may give the child a teething ring or have him/her wear it around his/her neck. This is a way to provide comfort to the pain of teething while teaching the child that biting others is not an appropriate response to the discomfort.
- Often, we have a child help the child who he/she bit. They go together with a teacher to wash the area and then get ice. The child who bit his/her friend may sit and help hold ice on the injury.
- Through observation we may find that a particular situation creates a stressful environment for a child in which his/her response may be to bite. If this is the case, we do our best to prevent this situation from occurring between the children. We redirect children away from stressful or frustrating situations.
- If a child is consistently biting, we may request a meeting with the parents so that we can communicate and problem solve together as a team. If necessary, out of safety for others, we may place a child who is habitual in biting on a biting contract.