

# Biting

## Information

For many children, biting is a normal part of their development. Babies bite objects as a means of exploring the world. For those who are teething, biting into objects can help to relieve the pain and discomfort.

Biting usually occurs with children aged 18 months to 4 years old

Biting is a common occurrence, as many children pass through this particular stage of development. It is therefore important to acknowledge this and have clear strategies to minimise incidents.

Biting is a form of communication, particularly for those who have not developed the vocabulary they need to express their feelings such as anger, frustration, fear, excitement or over stimulation.

A Child might bite to:

- Relieve pain from teething.
- Explore cause and effect (“What happens when I bite?”).
- Experience the sensation of biting.
- Satisfy a need for oral-motor stimulation.
- Imitate other children.
- Feel strong and in control
- Get attention.
- Act in self-defence.
- Communicate needs and desires, such as hunger or fatigue.
- Environmental Changes - Feeling crowded or overwhelmed.
- Transitions - moving home, new nursery, new room, sibling.

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### How to Support

There's not much worse than seeing a bite mark on your child. All of our parental primal instincts as our child's protector come into play. It is natural to be upset. Try to remember that biting is a common childhood behaviour; it is not a negative reflection on the child, the family, or the nursery.

Remember, how adults respond to biting is more critical than the behaviour itself. Children are still learning skills like self-regulation and emotional expression. Shaming children does nothing to teach those skills. But, a calm, empathetic response will go a long way in resolving the feelings and reasons behind biting, and build a solid relationship of trust for further learning.

Biting feels scary to both the child who received the bite and the one doing the biting. Empathize with both.

#### How we support:

- Daily Routine - routines help children feel more comfortable and can reduce the stress and frustration that sometimes leads to biting.
- Observing/ Supervising - watch for the signs e.g. crying, screaming, anger, pushing, not wanting to share.
- Offering a Chew Buddy or Teething Rings.
- Provide Calm Areas - For rest, sleep and relaxation. This enables children to recharge their batteries and supports both their physical and mental wellbeing.
- Activities - materials that support your children to relax and release tension. Yoga or deep breathing. Playdough, foam balls, bubbles, soft music, books and other stress-reducing items.
- Teaching social-emotional skills by modelling them e.g. understanding, empathy for others, positive relationships & managing emotions.
- Making sure the children's needs are met (hungry, tired, bored, sad or in need of comfort).

