

The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

CHILD CARE AND BITING

There's nothing like predicting the inevitable.

If your child is in child care, eventually one toddler is going to bite another toddler. And if it's your child that is being bit, you are going to get upset. Even if your child is the biter, you are also going to be distressed.

You can work with your child care provider to help keep biting to a minimum. You can also make sure procedures are in place to handle biting once it occurs.

Predict The Inevitable

Biting will happen - it is a stage that many toddlers go through. It is helpful to know that biting is not a predictor of later aggressive behavior, and it should not be grounds for expulsion from a child care program. Studies



show that one out of 10 toddlers and 2-year-olds are biters. The occurrence of biting in child care is highest in September, lowest in the summer and usually peaks around 10:00 a.m.

Biting is most common when toddlers are under stress or going through a developmental change. Once your child can use words and has a little more control over

his or her behavior, biting will be less of an issue.

It helps to understand why toddlers bite.

- ▶ Their back teeth are coming in. Their gums hurt.
- ▶ They still use their mouth to explore the world.
- ▶ They don't have the words to tell you what they want.
- ▶ They don't understand having to wait for something.
- ▶ They do understand there are things they want to do, but are unable or not allowed to do.
- ▶ They may not be getting enough oral stimulation in their diet.
- ▶ The setting may be overwhelming.

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Prevent Or Minimize Biting

Biting is less common in a calm environment. Your child care provider should be doing as much as possible to avoid unnecessary commotion and competition for toys and adult attention. You should expect to see the following:

- ▶ Watchful adult supervision
- ▶ Teething toys (that are sanitized frequently)
- ▶ Children being taught to share, wait and use their words
- ▶ Daily activities that engage toddlers in sensory activities such as using straws, crunching on ice or blowing on a whistle
- ▶ Foods that have a variety of tastes, temperatures and textures that require sucking, gumming, munching, crunching and chewing
- ▶ Supervised use of toothbrushes and oral stimulation brushes that allow children to massage their gums
- ▶ Planning for individual children's needs, interests and developmental levels
- ▶ Written policies that describe how the program handles biting

- ▶ Information for parents about how to prevent and respond to biting

Respond To Biting

Biting is scary for the whole group - for the child being hurt, the child doing the biting, and the group that witnesses the results. A good program will have procedures in place to deal with biting. You should expect your caregiver to respond calmly and take steps to minimize future incidents.

If your child is bitten, you should expect your child to be comforted and given appropriate first-aid. You should receive a written injury report. When you hear your child has been bitten, stay calm. Let the caregiver explain what happened. Find out what steps are being put in place to reduce chances that this will happen again. **Please note that your child care provider is legally not allowed to tell you who did the biting.** If your child is repeatedly being bitten, and you think that your provider is not taking care of the problem, you should notify your local licensing office. For contact information, call Child Care Aware® at 1-800-424-2246 or visit www.childcareaware.org/en/.

If your child is the biter, you should expect your child to be comforted as well. It's scary to lose control and bite. Once your child is calm, he or she should be helped to see that the child who was bitten has been hurt. Then your child should be redirected to another activity.



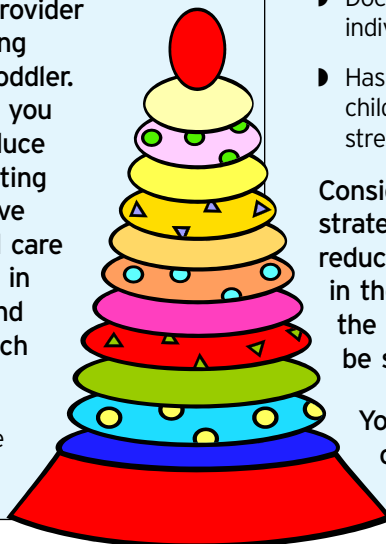


The providers should consider the best strategies to use with your child to prevent future biting. Your child may need a teething toy, a different toy, or a reminder about learning to share or wait.

Problem Solve

You and your child care provider should spend time watching and understanding your toddler. Share positive techniques you have used at home to reduce the incidents of biting, hitting or other specific aggressive behaviors. Help your child care provider look for patterns in the biter's environment and emotional state during each biting episode.

- ▶ Does the time of day make a difference?



- ▶ Was the child uncomfortable, sick, hungry, sleepy, bored or excited?
- ▶ How long has it been since the child last ate?
- ▶ Does the child feel crowded?
- ▶ Is the child over stimulated or under stimulated?
- ▶ Does the child always bite the same individual?
- ▶ Has there been a change at home or at the child care program that affects the child's stress level?

Consider which of the prevention strategies will be most successful in reducing your toddler's urge to bite in the future. Make a plan to support the biter's needs and help the child be successful.

You and your provider can guide your child toward self-control and away

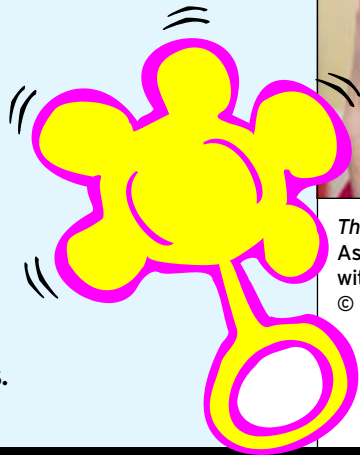
Child Care and Biting

from biting. The key is understanding - for adults and children alike.

For More Information

American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/healthtopics/childcare.cfm, has a parenting section on its website that covers a variety of issues on raising children.

Talaris Research Institute, www.talaris.org, provides research summaries for parents and the general public about a variety of child development and parenting topics.



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