LITTLE Learners
CHILDREN'S CENTER

Biting Policy and Procedures

Unfortunately biting is an occurrence that happens in most childcare settings. Although causes can vary, often children without fully developed verbal skills may bite other children to express themselves. We at Little Learners take this very seriously and follow this protocol to reduce biting incidents.

When a bite occurs, the classroom teacher will treat the injury, log the incident, prepare incident reports, notify the parents of the children involved, and will alert their supervisor.

If the biting continues, the classroom teacher will keep a comprehensive log of the incidents including: time of day, area of the center, activity in engaged in, teaching staff, etc. This is done to establish any patterns that might be occurring. At that point, when possible, the classroom teacher will "shadow" the child during targeting times to prevent the biting and redirect the child. In addition, strategies may include separating children, revising seating, changing activity times, etc.

All staff at the center participate in positive behavior training. We consult with our Social And Educational Consultant regarding specific concerns and work with staff from the Birth to Three Program and the Building Blocks Program to ensure reduce incidents.

If parents or staff members have concerns about children, safety, or policies they should speak with their supervisor or the Center Director immediately.

Is Biting Normal?

October 11, 2011/0 Comments/in Autism, Behavior, Birth-3, Development, Feeding, Kindergarten-5th Grade, Occupational Therapy, Parenting, Preschool, Sensory Integration, Speech and Language /by Deanna Swallow

Parents often ask if it's normal for their toddler to bite. It can feel both concerning and upsetting for parents to find out that their child is biting others. If this sounds familiar to you, you're not alone. Here are a few guidelines and tips to consider when navigating your toddler's biting habit.

Consider Your Child's Age

1. Biting is more common for children under 3 years of age. In determining whether or not your child's biting habits are normal, consider their age and developmental level.
2. Under 1 year, mouthing objects is an important part of feeding and speech development. This is how children develop oral-sensory awareness in their mouth, as they explore various objects.
3. Between 1 and 1½ years, children may bite others when they are excited. It's important to convey to children that biting is not okay
4. Between 1½ and 3 years, children might bite more out of frustration. Frustration often arises when children cannot convey their intents, or feel powerless against limits. It's still important to convey that biting is not acceptable.
5. After 3 years, biting is considered to be less typical, and is likely a behavioral response to frustration or fear. Children might feel frustrated or fearful when they don't have control over a situation, when they can't effectively communicate, or when they don't like the limits set by others.

Consider Possible Triggers:

Understanding why your child bites is a critical step in determining how to intervene.

Here are a few questions parents can ask themselves to identify causes behind their child's biting habit:

- Is there a particular environment when biting occurs more frequently?
- Is there a time of day when biting occurs more frequently?
- What is your child's emotional state when they bite?
- What tends to trigger biting? For example, does your child bite when you tell them "no"? Do they bite when they can't communicate their thought/ideas?
- Who does your child tend to bite the most?

What Can Parents Do?

- Respond quickly, and let your child know that biting is not okay. Use a firm voice, and tell them "No. It is not okay to bite".
- Help your child understand that biting hurts other people. Believe it or not, this may be a surprise to your child.
- If your child is struggling to use words, help them by giving them words to express their feelings. For example, if your child is upset because a peer took their truck, then model "You can say: 'It's my turn' or 'I want the truck'".
- Talk to your child ahead of time about appropriate social rules. You might say "It's not okay to bite people" or "You can use words, but you cannot bite."
- Talk to your child about things that they can bite. You might say "We can't bite people, but we can bite apples! What else can we bite?"
- Be proactive about situations that frequently result in biting. Be ready to intervene and respond, or if necessary, limit situations that result in extreme frustration and biting.

Finally, don't battle this alone! Seek help from a licensed professional who can guide you through the process. Your child's therapist can help you uncover why your child is biting, and strategies to help your child find better ways to resolve their frustration.

Deanna Swallow

Deanna Swallow, M.A., CCC-SLP is a speech-language pathologist who earned her master's degree from Northwestern University. Prior to living in Chicago, Deanna attended the University of California at Davis, where she earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Human Development. During her time at Davis, Deanna served as a research assistant for an Infant-Development Study in the Department of Human Development. Deanna has experience working as a pediatric speech-language pathologist in private practice, Early Intervention, and in preschool and elementary school settings. She is strongly committed to helping children build confidence and achieve their maximum potential.

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