



Factsheet for Families

Biting in child care

It can be very distressing as a parent to receive a report from your child care service that your child has been bitten or has bitten another child. If your child has been bitten, you may worry about your child's welfare or feel angry toward the child who has bitten and/or the service. If your child has bitten another child you may feel guilt and embarrassment. However, there are many things that child care professionals can do to support and help children and families when biting occurs.

Why do children sometimes bite?

- Teething may increase the urge to bite as applying pressure on the gums can be comforting
- Babies often use their mouth for exploration which can turn into a bite
- Some toddlers lack self control and bite simply because there is someone close by
- Some young children may bite to get attention
- Some children deal with excitement and excess energy by biting
- Children can bite due to frustration, especially when they are too young to communicate well using words.

How do child care professionals support children who bite others?

They will use a range of strategies to manage biting incidents and to offer support to both children and their families. These include:

- Communicating to children that biting is never acceptable and that it hurts others
- Ensuring that the attention given to the child who has bitten is not interpreted as a reward by the child
- Acknowledging that children who bite are not naughty or abnormal and will often need adult help and support
- Supporting a child when they are going through a 'biting phase' by being watchful and supportive of the child, as this could prevent the behaviour before it occurs
- Work with families and other professionals where necessary to develop specific behaviour management strategies
- Acknowledging and showing approval of children's positive behaviours.

What can child care professionals do to minimise biting incidents?

- When teething could be a possible cause of biting, child care professionals should make sure babies have access to teething aids
- Making sure that there are moments of peace and quiet, without too much stimulation, to avoid over stimulating children
- Be ready to step in to assist young children to resolve disputes effectively if it appears that the conflict may escalate into a physical one
- Consider the specific patterns associated with recurring biting incidents to identify possible causes in the program or environment. For example, frustration, crowding, boredom or inadequate supervision may be causing children to engage in biting behaviour
- Ensure that there are adequate resources to minimise disputes and promote sharing and turn taking
- Work supportively with families when their children are going through a biting phase, and use information from families to develop anti-biting strategies
- Use positive behaviour guidance strategies to help children to learn that biting others is not acceptable.

To discuss any concerns or questions you may have regarding young children and biting, please speak to:

or telephone: