



# Biting

## Why Children Bite...

### Exploration

"Mouthing" things is something that all children do. Toddlers do not always understand the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone.

### Cause & Effect

Young children are interested in finding out what happens when they do something. They may discover that when they bite someone, they get a loud scream of protest!

### Attention

Older toddlers may sometimes bite to get attention. Biting is a way to make others sit up and take notice when they are not receiving enough positive attention and interaction.

### Imitation

Older toddlers love to imitate others. Sometimes children see others bite and decide to try it out themselves. *When an adult bites a child back in punishment, it generally does not stop the biting but teaches the child that biting is okay.*

### Independence

Toddlers are trying hard to be independent. Needing control over a situation is part of growing up. Biting is a powerful way to control others and quickly get what they want.

### Frustration

Growing up is a struggle. Young children experience a lot of frustration. At times, when they can't find words to express their feelings, they may hit, push, or bite.

### Stress

A child's world can be stressful, too. A lack of daily routine, interesting things to do, or adult interaction are stressful situations. Biting is one way to express feelings and relieve tension.

## What can you do?

Ask yourself some questions. When did the biting occur? Who was involved? Where did it happen? What happened before and after? How was the situation handled?

Look at your daily routine to be sure the child is getting enough sleep and nourishment.

Spend enough time with the child when she is doing more positive things.

Let your child relieve tension by rolling, squashing, and pounding playdough, or splashing in the bathtub.

Teach the child to use his words with others.

When the occasion arises, allow your toddler to make choices or direct a situation.



**The Center for Parent Involvement** (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at [www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi](http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi). The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPI (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

parent Support Series, Parent Tip Sheets, #3: Biting.

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