

Although developmentally appropriate in early childhood, biting can often become a social and behavioral nightmare for parents, children and even teachers. Older infants, toddlers, two's, and sometimes even preschoolers use their teeth for things other than chewing food. While this stage is developmentally predictable, it is not a behavior that is condoned. Because biting is a developmental phase, parents and teachers alike can take comfort in the fact that it will pass as the child grows and matures. Patience can make a difference.

The optimal strategy to decrease or halt biting behavior is to determine the precipitating triggers. Biting can be a child's attempt to express a myriad of emotions including affection, frustration, anger, boredom and teething pain. Obviously, this is a socially unacceptable way to express one's feelings. Teachers and parents must work together to understand this behavior and implement strategies and tactics to decrease the behavior, including:

- Communicate calm and firm messages to the biter, "We don't bite our friends."
- Shadow the biter and interrupt the potential bite before it occurs.
- Identify and interrupt the biting sequence.
- Offer teething rings and other sensory stimulation.
- Review the child's day to identify and eliminate trigger events as possible.
- Provide the child more autonomy in his environment.
- Reinforce the unacceptable nature of this behavior at home.
- Actively comfort the victim in the presence of the child who bit to help them understand that they have hurt their friend.

Health risks associated with biting are of obvious concern for the parents of both the child who was bitten and the biter. Research has shown that the risk of infection or transmission of blood borne pathogens from biting incidents in early childhood settings is very rare. The Get Well Place nurse will assess the children and carefully clean the bite with soap and water and use antibiotic ointment, as appropriate. Both sets of parents will receive communication regarding the incident.