



## Biting Policy

Children's biting other children is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors in group child care. It can occur without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the children, the parents, and the Caregivers involved. For many young children, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Children try it out as a way to get what they want from another child. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause the other child to drop what they are holding so they can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings.

For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. Biting happens for different reasons with different children under different circumstances. The first step is to look at why it may be happening. They may bite for a variety of reasons:

### **Reasons why children might bite:**

- Teething-when their teeth hurt it feels better to chew on something.
- Curiosity-young children may bite to see what their friend's arm may taste like or to see the reaction.
- Frustration-instead of hitting another child with whom they are upset the child may bite. Or if things are not going their way they get very angry and frustrated and lash out by biting
- Copying-children who see another child or adult biting (even in fun-"You're so cute, I could eat you up, Yum Yum!") may think it is fun or a good idea
- Seeking attention-biting is a good way of getting others to take notice even if the attention gained is negative.

No matter what the cause, biting in a group situation causes strong feelings in all involved. It does help, however, to be aware of the potential problem before it happens, and to form a plan of action if it does occur. The Nursery has developed the following plan of action to be used if and when biting occurs in our center

Biting is often very painful and frightening for the child who is bitten. It can also be very frightening for the child who bites.

**Stopping a child from biting is not easy. It is important that we are calm and consistent in our handling of it.**

At The Nursery at Our Lady of Sorrows we acknowledge that biting is a common behavior among young children. We recognize that the majority of children will learn not to bite in time and are very clear, firm and calm when a child does bite and offer praise and warmth when they don't.

If an incident of biting does occur, the parents of both children will be informed of the event. The incident will also be recorded in the Incident Record Chart. If your child has bitten another child, we strongly recommend that you DO NOT bite them as a punishment. It sends a very confused message to your child.

**When a child bites:**

We show disapproval and very firmly and calmly say something like "No, we do not bite! It hurts and it's not nice!" We use gestures and facial expressions to reinforce our disapproval.

**Steps taken for the child who bites**

1. The child is immediately removed using words such as "biting is not okay - it hurts." We avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the child. The caring attention is focused on the child who was bitten.
2. The child is talked to on a level that the child can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him." "We don't put our teeth on people."
3. We redirect the child to other area. A Caregiver reads "*Teeth Are Not For Biting*" as soon as possible
4. The Caregiver writes an accident report and notifies the parents of the child who bit.
5. The bite is recorded on incident on Incident Chart

If a child persists with biting The Nursery will make a plan to monitor and support the child and family. We may seek advice from other professionals.

**If a child is a victim of biting:**

Biting is always taken seriously and staff members do their best to ensure that it is stopped as soon as possible. We will not disclose the name of the child who has bitten. It is unnecessary to know their identity. If you find out the identity of the child who has bitten your child we strongly recommend that you do not complain directly to the other

parents. The family has already been informed that their child bit someone. We will not allow you to reprimand the child.

Steps taken for the child who was bitten:

1. The Caregivers separate the child from the child who bit them
2. The child who was bitten is soothed and comforted.
3. If needed a Caregiver will administer first aid.
4. An accident report is written and we notify the child's parents (in writing).

**If biting continues:**

1. The room staff meet with the director on a routine basis for advise, support and strategy planning.
2. The Caregivers chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
3. The center informs the parents that there is a problem and the procedures that will be followed to deal with it.
4. A Caregiver will "shadow" children who indicate a tendency to bite:
  - \* Head off biting situations before they occur.
  - \* Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
  - \* Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.
5. A Caregiver will "shadow" children who have a tendency to be bitten:
  - \*Head off biting situations.
  - \*Teach responses to potential biting situations: "No" or ""Don't hurt me!"
6. Work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed.
7. Hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
8. Consider early transition of a child "stuck" in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment **ONLY** if developmentally appropriate.

The Nursery does not believe that removing a child who bites from the center is an appropriate response. Try to remember that ALL young children could potentially bite someone. Only in very extreme circumstances would a family be asked to leave The Nursery.