

Take Control of Biting Behavior

Biting is a normal part of childhood development. It is a common behavior for many toddlers. Still, a biting incident causes much pain for parents and children.

Knowing the facts about biting helps parents deal with it. Biting has nothing to do with a child being “bad or good”. It is not the result of “bad” parenting.



Toddlers bite others for many reasons. Your little one may be:

- **Teething.** Pressure on swollen gums feels good. Offer him a cool washcloth or a chilled teething toy. Homemade frozen juice-sicles or popsicles may also help him.
- **Over-tired.** Stick to a regular nap and bedtime schedule as much as possible. Do not schedule playtime when she is tired and cranky.
- **Using his mouth to explore his world.** He may bite whatever he puts in his mouth – books, toys, clothes and fingers. He will grow out of this stage.
- **Feeling afraid, angry or frustrated.** Kids often bite when they are learning to share. Teach her words to express what she feels. “Tell Sally you are playing

with the dinosaur”. “Ask Ben if you can play with the blocks.” Watch her for signs of stress. You will learn when she is thinking about biting. Distract her. Give her a hug. Talk to her softly, and help her gain control.

- **Needing some attention.** Make time to read and play with him daily – one-on-one.
- **Wanting to see what happens when she bites someone.** It is a part of learning.

While biting is a common toddler behavior, you should never allow it. When your child bites:

- **Stay calm.**
- Say “*no biting*” in a firm voice with a scowl on your face. Avoid yelling.
- Teach empathy. Give your attention to the person who was bitten. Say to your child, “*Look at Henry cry. It hurt when you bit him.*”
- Help your child say, “*I’m sorry*”.
- *Never bite him back.*
- *Never call her names, like “the biter”.*
- *Never shame him.*

Children usually stop biting by age 3 – 3½. If your 3 year old is still biting, seek help from a doctor.

*Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John’s Children’s Hospital
to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.*



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
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