

For further support , advice or guidance contact:

Behaviour Support Team 2-12 years

Autism Spectrum Education Team (ASET)

Early Years Inclusion Team (SENCO's)

Integrated 0-19 25years(SEND)Health and Wellbeing Service
(Health Visitors and School Nursing)

www.northlincslocaloffer.com

www.autism.org.uk

www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/earllysupport

www.chewigem.co.uk

www.rdash.nhs.uk



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Behaviour in the Early Years Biting



Experts say that up to a quarter of children will bite at some stage during their childhood. This occurs mostly between the ages of 2 and 3. It is a phase that does usually pass. Despite knowing this biting can be one of the most difficult childhood behaviours to deal with.

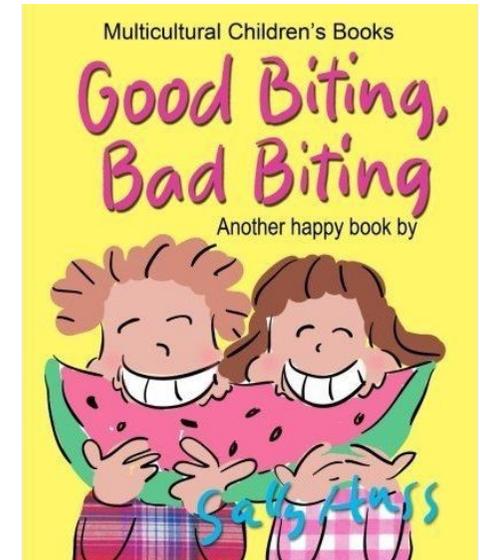
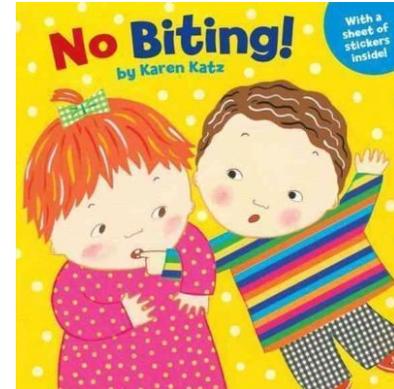
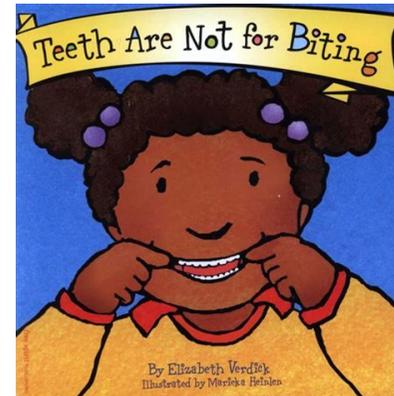
It is often painful and frightening for the person who is bitten, and frightening for the child who bites because of the upset and anger it can cause and the feeling of loss of control. Other children may also be upset, disturbed, or start to imitate.

It is difficult for parents and carers as well. If your child has been bitten you may be outraged and angry. If your child is doing the biting you may be embarrassed and frustrated.

This leaflet is designed to give support, advice, guidance and provide strategies.



Books to share with children...



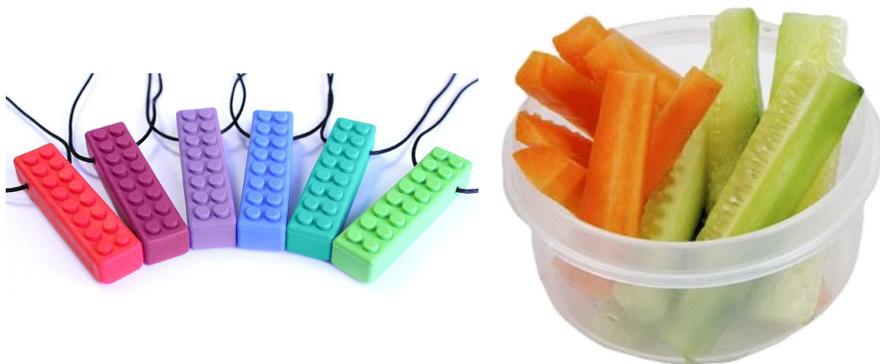
Resources for children:

Teeth are not for biting

No Biting! A lift the flap book

Good biting, bad biting

Sample resources...



Why do some children bite?

Children bite for different reasons. Some children see it as a form of communication, whilst others feel that the attention given after they have bitten is a reward. The first step in learning to control biting is to look at why it may be happening.

Natural exploration: Teething

When children are teething they often bite to relieve the discomfort of sore and tender gums. Biting is a way that all young children explore the world. As parents/carers and practitioners know, everything goes into the mouth! Sometimes this will involve biting.

Expressing emotion: Love

Oddly enough, young toddlers can bite as a way of showing love. Toddlers have really intense feelings but don't know how to show them. Biting can be a way of expressing their feelings. Mothers often don't understand why it's just them who get bitten.

Learned behaviour

The child may have learned that the behaviour can be very powerful way of controlling the environment. A behaviour which was initially a response to physical pain or frustration could eventually become a way of avoiding a demand or ending an undesired situation. The child may have learned that they enjoy the reaction or interaction they get as a result of the behaviour.

Communication

Biting is often a way of expressing frustration. This can result from situations the child cannot cope with. They get angry because they cannot say what they want, or ask for help. If another child takes the toy they want they may respond with a bite. Children who are tired or hungry often bite as their resilience levels are low. Children who find it difficult to say what they want also find biting a solution to their needs. Biting is a quick and easy way to get attention. They may have no other functional way of communicating their needs, wants and feelings.

Control

Some children know biting is a way of getting other children or their parents to do what they want. They don't always do this consciously. It may happen when a group of children are jostling to be leader. Sometimes the youngest child in the family bites to gain power and as any child who's ever tried it has learnt, biting is a fantastic way of getting attention.

Stress

Many situations can cause stress in young children from starting in a new nursery to moving home. Children may be anxious or worried because of illness or a new baby in the house. Biting is a way to express feelings and relieve tension.

Managing Emotions

Challenging behaviour can often be diffused by an activity that releases energy or pent up anger or anxiety. This might be punching a cushion, bouncing on a trampoline or running around the garden.

Working Together

Difficult behaviour like biting is often temporary. It is important that parents, carers and adults in the early years setting work together.

Sharing information about the causes of biting, particular incidents that have happened and plans of how to deal with it are vital. This will help in identifying difficulties where they happen and also help keep things in perspective.

A consistent strategy is the best way forward to deal with a difficulty such as biting.



Good behaviour

Never underestimate the significance of praising “good behaviour.” Even if attention seeking is not part of the problem, it is likely to be part of the reaction, which then makes the biting continue.

It is extremely important that the child experiences positive adult attention for the behaviour that you want to encourage, e.g. good sharing.

Everyone who is involved with the child must be informed of what you are trying to do and encouraged to respond in exactly the same way.



Excitement

Biting sometimes occurs because a child has become excited in their play, but lacks self-control developmentally.

Seeking Sensory Input

Some children may experience sensory processing differences. Biting stimulates the part of their nervous system that helps them know what their body is doing.

Frustration or Distress

Life can be exceptionally overwhelming at times for children, and the behaviour may be an expression of sheer frustration or distress in response to a range of different stressors. This can include different demands, meeting new people, experiencing unpleasant sensory stimuli, a change in routine, switching activities or having to wait for something – some children have difficulty with the concept of time and sequencing.



What can we do about biting?

It is important to be clear about what the problem is. Within North Lincolnshire it is recommended that early years providers refer to the Early Years Behaviour Toolkit . A behaviour monitoring sheet can be used to record the “who, what, where, when and how” method. When did the biting occur? Who was involved? Where did it happen? What happened before or after? How was the situation handled? This information can then be analysed and a plan formed.

Respond quickly and Consistently

All the adults must respond quickly and consistently. If a child does bite move straight in and comfort the child who has been bitten **first**. Only when the bitten child is calm (and any First Aid procedures adhered to) should you turn to the biter. Make it clear to the child that has bitten, “Stop. Biting hurts”. Remove them from the situation. Ensure that the other children immediately get your attention and that the biter does not get attention from other adults at that time. It’s important not to reward disruptive behaviour with a lot of attention. This will only reinforce the behaviour.

Never bite back! This frightens the child and teaches them that biting is okay.



Provide Sensory Opportunities

Find alternative activities, or provide a basket/box of alternative objects, that provide a similar sensory experience to that provided by the challenging behaviour, and build these into the daily routine. For a child who bites, you could provide chewy tubes, teething toys, drinking through straws or a sports bottle, blowing bubbles or eating crunchy snacks.

Remember to consider health, safety and hygiene of equipment.

Further strategies

- Redirect to an appropriate activity
- Visual prompts and clues to reinforce activities and routines
- Extend play to link with popular toys and Interests so that children can distract themselves in the same area whilst waiting for “the” toy of their choice
- Model turn-taking activities using phrases such as “please” or “turn please”
- Track tiredness, hunger and daily “hot spots” such as tidy time. Reflect and alter routines where needed

