

## Biting

Amy & Kids Co. realizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when children spend any amount of time together. I am always upset when children bite or are bitten, and recognize how upsetting it is for both sets of parents.

Although biting is never the right thing to do, it is common and a normal part of children's development. Children bite for a variety of reasons – most of which are not related to behavior problems. Therefore, our biting policy does not focus on punishment, but on effective techniques to address the underlying reason for the biting. When biting occurs we have three basic responses:

- ♥ To care for and help the child who was bitten. When a bite occurs we give immediate attention to the child who was bitten. The area of the bite will be washed with soap and water and ice or a cold pack will be offered.
- ♥ To help the child who bit to learn other behavior. The child who bit will be told "It's not OK to bite; biting hurts." After the child's feelings have been acknowledged the child will be redirected to a choice of two other activities to try.
- ♥ To work with the child who bit and examine our practices to help stop the biting. Teachers at Amy & Kids Co. express strong disapproval of biting. We work to keep children safe and to help children who bite learn different, more appropriate behavior. When there are episodes of ongoing biting a plan of specific strategies will be developed to address it.

Parents of both children will receive an "Injury Report," and the incident will be logged in the medical log; parents have access to medical log entries concerning their child. The name of both the bitten child and the child who bit will be kept confidential to help avoid labeling or confrontations that may slow the process of learning how not to bite.

We do not and will not use any response that is against licensing regulations, harms a child, or is known to be ineffective. Such responses include:

- ♥ Forcing something, like soap or hot pepper sauce, into the child's mouth. Children who have something forced into their mouths will be confused, scared, and become distrustful of the adults who did it.
- ♥ Encouraging parents to punish the child at home. Young children's attention span is quite short so children won't connect a punishment at home with incidents that happened at child care.
- ♥ Bribing the child not to bite. Young children cannot make the connection between an action and a reward, and are unable to make decisions about behavior based on delayed rewards.
- ♥ Physical punishments such as spanking or biting the child back. Not only is physical punishment against licensing regulations, but since children learn behavior that adults model for them, a child who is hit or bitten by an adult is actually more likely to hit or bite others. In addition, biting back damages a child's feeling of trust and security, which also makes them more likely to bite others.
- ♥ Sending the child home. While this may temporarily stop the biting, it does nothing to address the underlying reason for the biting. When the child returns, nothing has changed and the biting may resume.
- ♥ Keeping the child away from other children or from one particular child. Keeping children apart so they can't interact may temporarily stop biting, but it doesn't teach the children how to get along. In order for children to learn how to interact without biting they need the opportunity to play together.

The following responses have been proven to be effective and will be used to address the specific biting problems that are occurring:

- ♥ Close observation of the child to uncover a pattern to biting behavior. Why the child is biting, if the bites occur at a particular time of the day, and what circumstances surround biting incidents are all important clues. Children will also be observed for signs of tension or anxiety so these can be addressed and the child redirected before biting occurs.
- ♥ Relief of teething pain. Children who are teething will be encouraged to bite on teething toys, cold cloths, and other safe

items. These items will be offered on a regular basis, and cleaned and sanitized after each use. Parents of teething children will be asked how they soothe teething pain at home, and encouraged to bring medications or other items for their child's comfort to child care.

- ♥ Modeling positive behavior and strategies for handling frustration. Nurturing, sharing, respect, verbal, patient and empathetic behavior will be modeled by teachers and reinforced when seen in the children. Positive ways to handle anger and frustration, as well as words to use instead of biting, will also be practiced.
- ♥ Sharing control. Children need opportunities to feel powerful and have control, so they will be encouraged to decide between two acceptable choices as often as possible.
- ♥ Positive attention. Extra effort will be made to lavish positive attention on children who are biting, by noticing and commenting on acceptable behaviors and ignoring unacceptable ones when possible.
- ♥ Shadowing the child. When all other possibilities have been exhausted, the child will be shadowed if possible. Shadowing involves an adult staying with the child all the time, ready to redirect the child before he/she can bite or intercepting an attempted bite before it can occur. Because shadowing requires one adult to be devoted to one child all day, it is difficult for most centers to do, and unless other techniques have been tried beforehand the underlying problems will still exist so the biting is likely to resume once shadowing stops.

Each of these techniques will work equally well on other aggressive behaviors such as hitting, kicking, hair pulling, pinching, and the like. They can be practiced at home to lessen these behaviors at home and to reinforce the work we're doing at child care.