What to Do and Say

1. In a calm, serious, and firm voice say to the biter, “Biting hurts. You can bite an apple or a carrot, but I can’t let you bite Jimmy.” Often children do not realize that biting is painful.

2. Help the child that has been bitten. You could say, “I think that hurts. Let’s wash it with a cool wet towel.”

3. Involve the biter in helping to make things better. Help the biter understand the consequences of her actions and the seriousness of the action.

4. Encourage, but do not force the biter to comfort the victim with kind, gentle words or touch. Respect the wishes of the child that was bitten.

5. Teach biters new skills. Teach them simple words to help them feel safe, such as “my turn” or “stop.” Read a children’s book about biting such as “Teeth are Not for Biting” by Elizabeth Verdick.

6. Involve both children in a calming activity, such as play dough, sand or water play, to help them relax.

Think about what happened.

Who, What, When, Where, and Why?

- Who was involved in the situation?
- What were the children doing just before the incident?
- When did it happen (time/activity)?
- Where did it happen?
- Why do you think it happened?

Was the child hungry or tired?
Is the child experiencing teething pain?
Are there enough favorite toys?
How can you help?

Resource: Children’s Book

Sources:
Penn State Better Kid Care, Biting and Sharing. http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu
University of Missouri-Columbia, ParentLink, What To Do About Biting? http://missourifamilies.org/features/parentingarticles/parenting1.htm

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Biting is a common behavior in children ages 14 to 24 months. Most biting occurs in toddlers who have limited language skills. As a child's language improves, biting usually stops.

Biting has many causes. Biting can be caused by teething pain, hunger, anger, frustration, stress or boredom.

Biting may occur when a child is trying to protect his space or trying to prevent another child from taking his toy.

Biting may signify that a child is going through a difficult transition such as giving up her bottle, moving to a big bed or welcoming a new baby to the family.

Biting occurs more often when a child is confined in a small space and feels like his space has been invaded.

Biting is a sign a child needs extra help. When you stay close to a child, it can help her feel safer and she will be less likely to bite. Give the child hugs and attention.

A child that bites needs to learn new coping skills. Stay calm and teach the child a better way to respond using words.

### CAUSES of BITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEAS to TRY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEETHING PAIN</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HUNGRY OR THIRSTY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NEED MORE ADULT ATTENTION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UNABLE TO EXPRESS NEEDS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHILD IS STILL PUTTING EVERYTHING IN MOUTH</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FRUSTRATION or ANGER</strong> (i.e. activity too hard for child)</td>
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<td><strong>FEELS THREATENED</strong> (i.e. someone trying to take his toy)</td>
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<td><strong>TRYING TO COMMUNICATE/DOESN’T UNDERSTAND THAT BITING HURTS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>FEELS OVERWELMED</strong> (i.e. change of activity, clean-up time, move to new space) <strong>TOO MUCH NOISE OR LIGHT</strong> <strong>TOO MANY PEOPLE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRESSFUL CHANGES</strong> (i.e. new baby, new caregiver, move, divorce, giving up bottle or crib)</td>
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<td><strong>CONFINED TO A SMALL SPACE WITH GROUP OF OTHER CHILDREN</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BORED</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RECEIVES A STRONG REACTION (ATTENTION)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>AGGRESSION</strong> (i.e. wants the toy another child has)</td>
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He or She? Him or Her? This publication takes turns referring to children as “he” or “she” but all references include all children.