

# TIP SHEETS

## How to Prevent Biting

### PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Many infants, toddlers, and young children bite. Once you understand why a child is likely to bite, you can take steps to help reduce, stop, and prevent biting through:

Observation  
Distraction  
Communication



### OBSERVE

Have you noticed any triggers to biting? Learn where, when, and in what situations biting occurs. Stay close by as children learn to cope with their big feelings and while they build better communication skills.

### DISTRACT

When things are too difficult, biting is a quick way for small children to express their frustration. But when they are shown something interesting or new, children may forget they are angry or frustrated.

Distract children by giving them toys or activities that they can be successful at, and show interest as they engage with it.

### COMMUNICATE

Help children learn to express feelings with the appropriate words and actions by practicing. Words like *stop*, *mine*, and *no* help them set limits. Notice when children attempt to use their words and let them know that it was a good choice.

### ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- When things are too difficult, children will react—often ending in a bite. Plan activities and have toys available that are age-appropriate.

- Offer foods with a variety of textures to meet children's sensory needs (soft, hard, sweet, sour, etc).
- Give attention to the child who was bitten. This provides the right amount of attention to everyone involved and avoids giving too much attention to the biting.
- Remember to talk to the child who bit about what choices they DO have by discussing what they can do next time instead.
- Keep your cool! Supporting a child who bites can be overwhelming.



## STRATEGIES TO AVOID

- Avoid calling the child a “biter” to others. This not only causes more biting but tends to lower a child's self-esteem.
- NEVER bite a child back! This sends a mixed message that biting is okay. Instead, model the behaviors you would like to see.
- Punishment may teach a child “what not to do” but does not teach a child “what to do instead.”

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Responding to Your Child's Bite**

[http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/biting-parenting\\_tool.pdf](http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/biting-parenting_tool.pdf)

**Toddlers and Biting:  
Finding the Right Response**  
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/232-toddlers-and-biting-finding-the-right-response>

*For more information, visit [inclusivechildcare.org](http://inclusivechildcare.org).*

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