



the infants' home  
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES



## Resource Sheet for Families: Managing Biting in Childcare – A Guide for Parents

*Biting is both one of the most common and one of the most challenging issues that parents, educators and children themselves experience in childcare settings.*

Apart from being painful for the child who has been bitten, a biting incident causes strong emotional reactions. The parents of a child who has been bitten usually feel upset and worried about their child's welfare, and the parents of a child who has bitten feel guilty and anxious about their child's behaviour.

Understanding why children bite and what may trigger biting incidents can help minimise the distress caused.

### **Why do young children sometimes bite?**

Biting is quite common in children between the ages of one and three. Children bite for various reasons, depending on their age, development, and circumstances. Some of the most common reasons include:

- **Teething:** Children may bite to relieve the discomfort of emerging teeth.
- **Exploration:** Young children use their mouths to explore the world, which sometimes leads to biting.
- **Communication:** Children can become frustrated when they have not yet developed the verbal communication skills to express themselves appropriately.
- **Connection seeking:** A child may bite if they notice it gets a strong reaction from adults or peers as they may be seeking ways to connect with others to support their emotional needs.
- **Low emotional regulation:** Young children are still learning how to regulate their emotions, and this can be exacerbated when a child feels tired, unwell or overwhelmed.
- **Overstimulation or stress:** Crowded or high-energy environments can overload a child, leading to impulsive behaviours like biting.

Some children may only bite once or twice, while others may go through a 'phase' of biting. It is important to remember that children do not bite because they are 'bad' or 'naughty'. Biting behaviour usually stops as children develop their social, communication and self-regulation skills.

### **How does The Infants' Home minimise biting incidents?**

While some biting incidents are inevitable in childcare settings, The Infants' Home's Integrated Team of educators and allied health therapists minimise the occurrence of these by:

- Supporting children to manage their emotions and to express these safely. Helping children develop their social, empathy and play skills.
- Monitoring patterns or specific situations that may lead to a child biting.
- Offering appropriate teething toys for infants and toddlers to chew on safely.
- Creating calm learning environments by reducing noise, avoiding overcrowding, having predictable routines and ensuring there are adequate resources for children

When a child demonstrates a pattern of biting behaviour or is going through a phase of biting others regularly, our Integrated Team works with the child and their family to identify the possible causes or triggers for that child and develop individualised strategies to manage or minimise the biting behaviour.

### **Managing biting incidents at The Infants' Home**

The Integrated Team use positive, proactive strategies in line with our *Children's Social Competency Policy* to respond to biting incidents. These include:

- Remaining calm.
- Comforting the child who has been bitten and administering first aid if needed.
- Comforting the child who has bitten as they are often also distressed, either by the biting incident itself or by the situation that led to it.
- Using simple language, and a firm, gentle tone, to help the child understand that biting hurts others and is not acceptable.
- A child who has bitten another child (or adult) is never excluded, punished, or shamed.

### **The Infants' Home's Children's Social Competency Policy**

The *Guiding Children's Behaviour and Building Social Competency* policy explains The Infants' Home's approach to guiding children's behaviour positively, and nurturing their respect, tolerance and appreciation for others. A copy of the policy can be provided by your Centre Director.

### **Contact Us**

If you have any questions or would like more information, please email us at [childrensservices@theinfantshome.org.au](mailto:childrensservices@theinfantshome.org.au).