

## Reasons why a child may bite

**Expressing emotion-** 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" says Dirk Flower, chartered psychologist. "Biting can be a way of showing their feelings.

**Experimenting-** Toddlers are learning how their body works, they put things in their mouths and sometimes nip. It is impulsive and they do not mean to hurt. Often a baby chomps on someone when they are teething.

**Defending-** Young children learn to bite as a defense, especially if they cannot talk.

**Controlling-** Some children know that biting is a way to get their own way. They don't always do this consciously. Sometimes the youngest child in the family bites to gain power and attention.

**Frustration or irritation-** A child may want a toy back or they want a biscuit and they cannot cope with the situation. They may not understand turn taking or sharing. They do not mean to cause harm but they just cannot find the words to express themselves.

Biting should not just be ignored as it will not just go away. Parents should never bite their child back as this is not teaching them that biting is bad behavior. Children may continue to bite if it brings them a lot of attention, even if that is negative attention. Children's good behavior should therefore be focused on, and rewarded, in the hope that the child will steer away from wanting to bite again. Parents and practitioners can work together to create an action plan to create strategies to work



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# Auckland House Day Nursery



## Parent Information Leaflet

# Biting

**Why do children bite?**

**Strategies to help prevent  
biting**

**How we deal with biting at our  
setting**

Understanding why a child bites is the key to beating the problem. Not all children bite out of anger or to hurt another child. Experts advise parents to try and see biting as a way of communicating rather than just bad behavior- once we do that, we have got more choices in how to respond.

Biting is a behavior that is not uncommon in young children, but it can be frustrating and embarrassing for parents and caregivers. It is quite natural for children to bite their main caregivers or others within reach from around 12 months as it can relieve the pressure on children's sensitive gums while teething.

There are many different reasons why a child may bite and this is because all children are different. The reasons include expressing emotion, experimenting, defending, controlling, frustration or irritation. Although biting is considered a natural part of children's early development, if it persists between the ages of 18 months to 3 years, it starts to become more of a problem.

Biting tends to stop as a child's speech and language skills begin to develop. Parents/carers should work closely with a child and with the adults involved in their care to ensure the biting phase is worked through effectively and a positive outcome achieved.

### **How we deal with a biting incident at Auckland House Day Nursery**

When a bite has occurred at Auckland House the first step is to locate the bite and remove the children from the situation. The child who has been bitten will be comforted and a cold compress applied to the injured area. The child will be comforted for as long as they need and the bite will be assessed and checked to see if the skin has been broken. The members of staff who witnessed the bite will complete an incident form, one for each child who was involved (the biter and the child who has been bitten). The children's parents will then be notified about the incident on collection.

Once a child has bitten they will be monitored more closely. Not only to prevent further bites but to look for possible signs or links to why they child may be biting. We are happy to arrange meetings with parents on how we can work together to support a child and improve behavior.

The Auckland House team understand that a biting incident can be upsetting and frustrating for all parents involved. Biting incidents can be equally as upsetting and stressful for staff as not all biting incidents can be prevented.

At Auckland House we work hard to follow our behavior policy at all times and we believe that if we work together in partnership with parents we can beat the biting successfully together!

Please do not hesitate to speak to a member of our team if you have any further questions.

### **The child who has been bitten**

When a child has been bitten, they are hurt, upset and can be in shock. A cold compress should be immediately applied to the injury and lots of reassurance given. The child who has been bitten should receive the majority of the attention, this is to ensure that the child who has bitten does not gain too much attention for biting.

Within early years settings, children can be bitten more than once, even several times, this is due to the developmental stage that children are at. The main thing is to ensure that the child is comforted and given the support to overcome being bitten.



It is uncommon for children to become a biter after being bitten, although they may still associate that pain with the child who caused it. This means they may choose to stay away from that child or alternatively they may want to continue to play with them. Either way it is up to that individual child to make the decision themselves in order for them to overcome being bitten.