Understanding Biting in Preschoolers

A Guide for Parents



Biting is common in young children, especially toddlers and preschoolers. While frustrating, it's often a normal developmental stage. Here's how to understand and help if your child is biting.

Why Do Preschoolers Bite?

Children bite for different reasons, including:

Exploration:
Young children use their mouths to explore the world.

Teething:
Sore gums can make children want to bite.

Frustration or Anger:
They may not have coping mechanisms or emotional regulation.

Communication:
Unable to express their wants, needs, or feeling with words.

Attention-Seeking:
Biting may get a big reaction from adults or peers.

Overstimulation:
Some children bite when they are overwhelmed.

Imitation:
They may see another child bite and copy the behavior.

How to Redirect Biting Behavior

If you notice that your child is about to bite, try:

- Offering a teething toy or sour or chewy snack.
- Practice deep breaths or a calm-down technique together.
- Model words they can use instead ("I need help" "I feel mad.")
- Removing them from an overwhelming situation.

When is Biting Typical Behavior?

Biting is normal for children 3 and under but should decrease as they learn to express themselves. By ages 3-4, most children manage emotions without biting. If it continues past this age, they may need extra support.

How to Stop Biting

If your child bites, try these steps:

Stay Calm: Reacting with anger or punishment can make the problem worse.

Say What They Can Do: Say, "Biting hurts. We use our words."

Teach Alternatives: Encourage your child to use words or gestures to express feelings.

Use Positive Reinforcement: Praise your child when they handle frustration appropriately.

Provide Chewy Items: If your child bites due to teething or sensory needs, offer chew toys, sour or crunchy snacks.

Set Clear Rules: Let your child know that biting is not acceptable.

When to Seek Help?

Biting can be stressful, but with patience and guidance, most children grow out of it. By teaching healthy ways to express emotions, you can help your child communicate and interact positively with others.

If you have concerns talk to a pediatrician or call Milemarkers Therapy at 928-854-5439 to schedule a FREE SCREENING with an Occupational Therapist.

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