



## Got Teeth?

When environments, schedules, expectations, and interactions don't match toddler development, we can expect to struggle with biting.

### Children are less likely to bite if they:

- are supported with developmentally supportive care
- have strong attachments with familiar, consistent and responsive caregivers
- experience minimal/relaxed transitions during the day
- are cared for in small groups
- play in clearly defined, well organized, attractive learning areas
- have plenty of space to run outside
- have access to a cozy defined space that allow for self-regulation
- are allowed to carry their favorite "lovey" (security item)
- are encouraged to develop language skills
- are not overwhelmed by their environment
- enjoy 90 minutes developmentally appropriate activities daily
- enjoy active play time, exciting choices and free access to toys
- are well rested, fed and comfortable
- are not teething
- are offered appropriate sensory activities daily

A responsive caregiver can begin to anticipate when biting may occur and can make changes that can prevent biting. When biting does happen, the caregiver's response is important.

### A caregiver should respond by:

- staying calm
- address biter in a firm, calm voice in a simple and clear way for example.....

- \* "I can't let you bite Sam."
- \* "You bit him with your teeth and he doesn't like it."
- \* "You were so mad when he took your truck. Biting hurts people."
- \* "Sam had the toy you wanted, so you bit him. You can't have toys when you bite to get them."
- shift attention to the child who was bitten and model/mirror concern and sympathy for the child with words and facial expressions
- return to the biter and talk about what they can do next time
- encourage/model emotional repair between friends but don't force apologies
- respect child and family privacy when discussing biting events
- keep a running biting log that notes who, when, where, why and what was happening at that time.

*PITC: Toward a Better Understanding of Children's Behavior/Supporting Individual Needs of Infants and Toddlers (Training session) Zero to Three. (2/2010). Chew on this: Responding to toddlers who bite. No Biting, Policy and Practice for Toddler Programs by Gretchen Kinnell 2008*

**A  
toddler's  
mouth is  
their second  
set of eyes.**

