



RESPONDING TO TODDLERS WHO BITE AND HIT

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

AGENDA

- Review why children bite and hit
- Discuss the normalcy of these behaviors
- Learn ways to change the behavior



WHY CHILDREN BITE & HIT

- Young children at times will bite or hit which causes concern for parents and caregivers. It takes time and energy to modify (them) the behaviors
- For babies, hands and mouth are the first social tools
- The young child's job is to use these tools, and the parent/caregiver's job is to teach them how
- If left unchecked, these behaviors become aggressive behaviors in the toddler years



WHY A BABY MAY BITE

For babies, ask the following questions:

- Is the baby teething
- Is the baby overly tired
- Is the child out of his/her routine

Try and keep the baby on a routine and try and make sure they are getting plenty of sleep.



WHY TODDLERS MAY BITE & HIT

Aggressive biting and hitting is most common between 18 months to 2.5 years

Toddlers become aggressive:

- In order to release pent-up anger
- Control a situation
- Show power
- Protect their “turf”
- Get attention from adults who may be ignoring them



IS BITING AND HITTING NORMAL?

- Biting and hitting is a normal behavior or phase for most babies and young toddlers
- Most of the time it's due to the child being tired, jealous, angry or frustrated.
- Some just want to see what type of reaction they will get
- Children are expressing themselves and use this type of behavior because they have trouble communicating
- It's important to intervene early



CHANGING THE BEHAVIORS

- What triggers the behavior?
- If biting occurs, immediately take the child aside and tell them you cannot let them bite
- Redirect to a socially acceptable behavior
- Say “You may not hit.” If holding child, put them down (withholding attention) and make the above statement.
- Do not allow your child to hit you while talking to them



CHANGING THE BEHAVIORS

CONTINUED

- Do not bite back or hit back
- If child bites or hits another child, to get a toy, separate the children and say, “I cannot let you bite. Biting hurts. If you want the toy, you must ask for it nicely.”
- Encourage the child to say they are sorry.



CHANGING THE BEHAVIORS

CONTINUED

- For parents (not teachers or childcare workers)
 - use time-out: “Biting hurts, and it’s wrong to hurt. You are going to sit by me for a little while.”
- Model nonaggression: Look at how you express your disappointment and handle conflicts and make sure you are modeling the behavior you want your child to learn



SUMMARY

- It is developmentally normal for young children to explore behaviors like biting and hitting
- A child may hit, bite or shove for a variety of reasons
- Understanding why a child behaves in a certain way can help in prevention
- Children will learn through consistent, clear guidance





QUESTIONS?



RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE www.Tricare.mil
- Behavioral Health Services





THANK YOU

