

Are biting and hitting "normal" in children?

Surprisingly, yes! Biting is considered a typical behavior of infants and young children. When it comes to biting, it is expected that babies and toddlers will display this behavior until around three to four years of age, when it becomes a sign of atypical development.

Even if biting and hitting are part of what is considered typical child development, caregivers and parents/guardians must actively discourage these behaviors, as other children will get hurt. It is important that caregivers alert all parents of the program's policies towards repeated behaviors such as biting and/or hitting and to also cooperate with parents in supporting their children in the classroom.

Common Reasons Behind Biting or Hitting

- Exploring the world
- Relieve pain from teething
- Explore cause and effect
- Satisfy a need for oral-motor stimulation
- Imitate others
- Get attention
- Act in self-defense
- Communicate
- Anger and frustration
- Stress
- Sensory processing disorder (SPD)

The reasons why children hit can be very similar to why they bite: they feel frustrated, or they are trying to communicate something to someone else. However, they may be additional reasons why they may hit, such as the following:

- Anxiety: They may be undergoing some changes in their home situation that the caregiver may not be aware of
- Sleep: When children lack the sleep that they need on a daily basis, they are more unable to control their emotions, especially if they do not know how to control them
- Feeling unsafe: Children can possibly lash out due to feeling unsafe and insecure about their environment or who they are with
- Maturity: Children may not be on the same maturation level, potentially making communication difficult.

