

Biting Incidents – Information for Parents

December 2015

Biting incidents can occur among young children in child care centres during play or if they become upset. Most bites do not break the skin and are unlikely to cause infection. In addition, the risk of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV transmission in child care settings is extremely low. When bites do break the skin, both children involved in the incident need proper assessment and management.

If your child has been involved in a biting incident that has broken the skin it is recommended that you take your child to your family health care provider who will¹:

- Review your child's tetanus immunization status and update it as necessary.
- Start Hepatitis B vaccine series unless your child has already received the Hepatitis B vaccine series (normally given in Ontario in grade 7).
- Contact Toronto Public Health (TPH) immediately if your child has Hepatitis B, C or HIV to allow for confidential follow-up and counselling of the other child involved.

For incidents where a child has been bitten and their skin has been broken, parents and/or caregivers should monitor the wound for the next few days. If the wound becomes red or swells, take your child to their health care provider again.

Tips to reduce the risk of biting incidents in children²:

- Teach your child not to bite. When your child is old enough to understand, teach that biting hurts and can be dangerous to her / him and to the person she / he bites.
- Do not pretend to bite your child or let your child bite you in play. Do not bite your child back if they bite as this will teach them to bite.
- Reinforce a “no biting” rule at all times.
- Young children are still learning self-control. Show your child how to express anger with words like “no” or “I don’t like that” instead of with biting.
- Redirect or distract your child if you see a problem developing with a playmate

Please contact the TPH Bloodborne Diseases team for further questions and information. They can be reached at 416-338-8400 or by email at CDCBloodborne@toronto.ca.

¹ Adapted from: A bite in the playroom: Managing human bites in child care settings, DL Moore, Canadian Pediatric Society, Paediatr Child Health 2008; 13 (6): 515-519, Feb 1 2014

² Caring for Kids, CPS, http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/biting_in_child_care, accessed July 2015