

Managing Human Bites in Your Centre or School*

Information for Caregivers and Parents

What are the risks of bites?

Children in child care centres sometimes bite. Most bites do not break the skin and are harmless. We know from surveys of child care centres that most bites happen in September, at the beginning of the child care year. Toddlers (ages 13 – 24 months) are bitten most often, usually on the arms or face. Only one bite in 50 breaks the skin.

Will the bite become infected?

Bites in child care centres almost never become infected. Serious bites are unusual in child care centres.

Hepatitis & HIV Infections

The routine vaccination of infants and children against hepatitis B virus means that the risk of infection with hepatitis B from a bite is very low.

If a bite breaks the skin, the hepatitis B virus may pass from one child to another. The hepatitis B virus does not pass through normal, unbroken skin.

When should a child be seen by a doctor?

See a doctor if a child who is **not vaccinated against hepatitis B:**

- Is bitten and the skin is broken
- Bites another child and gets blood in their mouth

It is very unlikely that HIV will be transmitted through a bite in a child care centre or school, even when the skin is broken. Treating a child with anti-HIV drugs is not usually recommended.

* School boards may have protocols for managing human bites in schools.

How to Care for a Bite Injury

If the skin is not broken:

- Gently clean the injury with soap and water.
- Cover with a cold, clean cloth or pad to help reduce swelling.
- Comfort the child.

If the skin is broken:

- Let the injury bleed gently.
- Clean the injury carefully with soap and water.
- Cover with a cold, clean cloth or pad to help reduce swelling.
- Comfort the child.
- Apply a band-aid or dressing to cover the wound.
- Notify the parents.
- Child care centre management must report the incident to the Licensing Officer.



What to Do at Home

If your child is bitten and the skin is broken:

- Check whether your child has been vaccinated against tetanus and hepatitis B, and are up to date. If not, talk to your doctor or Public Health Nurse about getting vaccinated.
- Watch the injury for a few days; call your doctor, if the bite area gets red or swollen.

