

When Baby Bites at the Breast

If your baby has a good position with a deep latch and is drinking well, they will rarely bite. If biting occurs, it will usually happen during the initial latch on, a pause in the feeding, or at the end of the feeding.

Suggestions to Prevent Biting

Ensure you have a good milk supply.

- If your milk flow is slowing down during a feeding, try doing breast compressions. A baby can't bite when actively sucking.
- If your milk supply has decreased, your baby may bite out of frustration while trying to get your milk to let down and flow faster.
- If you think you have a low milk supply, talk to a health care provider who is knowledgeable about breastfeeding. Discuss possible reasons for decreased milk supply and suggestions to help build your supply.

Feed baby sitting upright if they have a cold or a stuffy nose.

- When your baby's nose is blocked, it is difficult for your baby to breathe.
- Some babies turn their head from side to side or lose their latch and pull back when they are congested. This can cause the baby to accidentally bite the nipple.
- Clearing mucous from your baby's nose before feeding and breastfeeding with your baby in an upright position can help.
- Check with your health care provider about treatment of your baby's cold.

Soothe your baby's gums before feeding if they are teething.

- It is comforting for a baby to chew and bite when their gums feel sore.
- Offer your baby something cold to chew and bite before breastfeeding such as a wet washcloth or a safe teething toy that is cold.

Provide a lot of eye contact and watch your baby's feeding patterns.

- Be ready to take your baby off the breast if they seem restless or distracted and not interested in breastfeeding.
- If your baby bites your nipple, stop nursing immediately and firmly tell your baby, "No".
- Remove baby from the breast by breaking suction – slide a clean finger between your breast and baby's gums or gently press into your breast by baby's mouth. Pulling baby right off the breast if they are biting can cause nipple damage.
- Continue the feeding only if baby is showing hunger cues or signs that they want to breastfeed. Babies quickly learn that biting means that the nipple (and milk) is taken away.

Be aware that some babies may struggle at the breast if they are given bottle nipples or pacifiers.

- The sucking and jaw movement used to breastfeed are different from those used to suck on a bottle nipple.
- Use of bottle nipples or pacifiers may result in the baby clamping down or chewing at the breast rather than latching and sucking deeply. Babies that like to chew on things may also nibble at the breast.

Remember - babies do not know biting hurts you. Your baby gets comfort and security with breastfeeding as well as nutrition.

Ask for help from a health care provider who has experience helping breastfeeding families if continued biting becomes a problem or if your baby is reluctant to go back to the breast.

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Revised June 2023