

When Baby Bites

By Kelly Bonyata, BS, IBCLC

Many people think that when baby gets teeth and has the ability to bite, then the nursing relationship has ended and it's time to wean. **Not true!** If your baby is nursing properly, then you should not feel teeth, even if baby has a mouthful of them. And keep in mind that it's physically impossible for baby to nurse and bite at the same time, because the tongue covers the bottom teeth/gum when baby is nursing.

Some babies never bite, but biting is a behavior that some babies do try, usually when they are teething. Rest assured that biting can be stopped with a little persistence on the mother's part. Biting is, for the vast majority of moms, a temporary issue that only lasts a short period of time.

Ways to prevent biting

Biting at the end of a nursing session:

Biting often takes place at the end of a nursing session when baby is getting bored and is no longer hungry. If you start to have a biting problem, watch for signs of boredom, and take baby from the breast before the biting starts.

★ **Tip: Use positive reinforcement and praise** for good latch on and careful unlatching.



When baby is teething:

Biting can also be brought on by teething. If baby seems to be teething rather than wanting to nurse, offer her a teething toy or something cold to bite (instead of you). Offer baby a teething toy after a bite or "near miss." When you do this, tell her, "This is for biting. Be gentle when you nurse." See also these [comfort measures for teething](#). More tips from WIC [here](#).

What do I do if baby bites me?

If baby bites, it can be very effective to calmly remove baby from the breast and say *nothing* (or perhaps make a calm comment like "oh? don't want to nurse right now?"), then end the nursing session for a bit. ***Stopping the nursing session is generally the most effective way to teach baby that nursing and biting do not go together.***

It is not a good idea to scream or yell on *purpose*

as a method to stop biting — there are better ways to teach baby not to bite.

Sometimes, of course, it's impossible not to yell in pain if baby catches you by surprise and/or bites hard. Sometimes yelling does stop baby from biting again; *however*, some babies think it's so funny that they continue to bite for the reaction, and other babies are so scared that they go on a [nursing strike](#). The chance that this method will stop baby biting is simply not worth the problems it can cause.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about breastfeeding or pumping.

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