

Mouthing (putting objects into the mouth but not attempting to ingest: Often as a way of getting increased tactile information)

Pica (Eating non food items)

Licking (People [skin; hair] Objects [metal; glass; toys])

Biting (Self or others. Can be related to needing increase 'proprioceptive/tactile' input or result from frustration/ attention seeking)

Chewing (Clothing, toys, objects, self. Can be a self calming/ self regulating activity)

Name:

**If you have any queries please contact your therapist.**

Our details:

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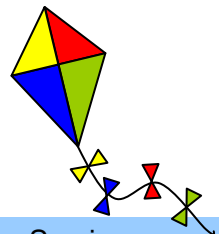
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## Oral motor activity ideas

### Advice to support Mouthing, Licking, Chewing & Biting

**Specific Advice:**

**These activities should be carried out in a safe environment and supervised by a responsible adult.**



## ADVICE TO SUPPORT MOUTHING, LICKING, CHEWING AND BITING

Oral motor activities are those that involve input in and around the mouth, they can often be neglected especially as children get older.

We quickly tell children to keep things out of their mouth, though many children (and adults) need this input to help them focus on learning and play.

There are number of reasons why children mouth, lick, chew and bite objects....

**Exploration:** Mouthing can be appropriate for a child's developmental level, i.e. it is normal for an infant to mouth objects as a way of exploring.

**Proprioception:** Mouthing can provide proprioceptive input which can have a calming or alerting effect depending on the activity. This can be provided in alternative ways by increasing the range of 'Heavy work' activities that your child completes

**Tactile:** Some children may enjoy the 'feel' of objects in their mouth. Generally increasing tactile experience (through hands, feet & body) will help to reduce the need to use the mouth but also introducing crunchy chewy foods at snack/ meal times

**Taste:** Children may like the taste of objects (licking glass & metal can be a favourite) this is often a way of seeking very specific tastes so is useful to look at their whole diet and introduce similar tastes into meals & snacks

**Self-regulation:** A child may try to gain or avoid sensory information to meet their sensory/ emotional needs

**Communication:** Biting can be a way of expressing frustration, especially if they have difficulty voicing their needs or emotions. Providing alternative communication systems such as Makaton or visuals may help before language develops

Some children need oral input almost constantly while others just occasionally.

### How you can help



- Support the need to explore the world through the mouth by providing 'Heavy work' (proprioceptive) and deep touch (tactile) input to the mouth which can help organise and calm the nervous system.

Try..

**Increasing the amount of 'Chewy foods'** included at meal & snack times – dried fruits, liquorice, bagels, cereal bars, pop corn and chewing gum.

**Resistive sucking' activities** – using curly straws, sports bottle with long straw, lolly pops, milk shake through a straw.

**Playing 'Blowing activities'** – bubbles "snake party blowers", splatter paintings (use thin paint on paper, blow air through a straw and watch the paint move), keep a small balloon off the floor

**A 'Vibrating toothbrush'** to clean teeth with

- May need to trial "chewellery" to reduce inappropriate or unsafe mouthing/ chewing



- Develop fine motor dexterity, control & discrimination to reduce the need to gain information through the mouth

**Complete dextrous fine motor activities** – threading, construction, mark making

**Develop pincer & tripod grasps** – posting coins, container play etc

Play games with eyes closed to feel & match different textures

- Use distraction to break the habitual nature mouthing/ chewing

Play games that involve both hands so they're less likely to reach for new things to put in the mouth

Offer a drink or a snack instead (see above)