



<b>KEYWORDS/SEO:</b>	Biting, breastfeeding, nursing
<b>DESCRIPTION:</b>	Baby biting while breastfeeding? Let's talk about why and what you can do for this nursing nightmare!

---

#### EMAIL:

Biting at the breast is such a common and feared experience. I get it, all of my kiddos have bitten me, and it really isn't pleasant, is it?!

Over on the blog today I'm talking about the different reasons biting at the breast happens beyond just teething and what you can do in those painful moments. We're talking about the mechanics of breastfeeding, when the biting happens, why the biting might be happening, and what you could implement that might help!

## BITING AT THE BREAST

You're nursing your sweet baby, feeling full of love. They pause to look up at you, and you make precious eye contact and are filled with all of that oxytocin. Then all of a sudden you're snapped out of this beautiful moment to the feeling of your baby's mouth clamped down on your breast! *OUCH.*

Have you had this happen to you? Or are you dreading the day this happens? It can be shocking and painful for sure, and the fear of it is **VALID**. I've been there!

I'm intentionally calling this "biting at the breast" and **not** "biting while nursing" and this is because of the mechanics behind breastfeeding that makes baby unable to *technically* bite *while* nursing.

We're going to cover the mechanics of breastfeeding, why biting may be happening, and some things you can try to implement when this is happening.

### THE MECHANICS OF BREASTFEEDING

When actively nursing, if baby has a proper deep latch, their lower jaw is elongated and their tongue is stretched over their bottom gum line to bring in more of the breast tissue.

When baby is nursing like this, their tongue is blocking their ability to bite down on your nipple or breast with upper and lower gums/teeth. So they can't *technically* be biting while actively nursing.

As baby pauses or slows down drinking, they bring their tongue back in and pull back a bit, maybe going on and off the breast. This is when both gums and teeth are exposed and opens up chances for them to be able to bite down!

## SO WHY IS MY BABY BITING?!

The mechanics help us understand *when* baby is biting at the breast, but it doesn't really tell us *why*. Understanding why can help us figure out what things to implement in the moment and can help us find the best solution for both you and baby. Here's 6 common reasons that babies bite at the breast:

### 1. TEETHING

This is often the most blamed thing when it comes to biting. Although it is definitely a source, there can be many other things happening!

But let's talk about what to do if babe really is teething.

I had this issue a lot with my daughter! She would try to bite the moment I would put her to my breast. I started to see that a lot of times, when she was chewing on her hands, she wasn't signaling hunger but was actually *just wanting to chew on something*.

Figuring that out was so, so helpful. I began offering her a toy and would nurse later on, and she wouldn't have any issues with biting me.

I call this ***"getting the bites out"***.

If your baby is teething, chewing is a great way for them to soothe their sore, inflamed gums. Many mamas, myself included, offer a cold toy or something to chew on before the nursing session to *"get the bites out"*. This can help them get some relief from that teething pain and \*hopefully\* not want to bite down while nursing!

Give yourself some time of trial and error to get to know what your baby is signaling to you, maybe adjust timing of feeds, and see what works for you! If you know baby is teething, try offering some chew time before you start nursing!

#### TIPS:

- Try offering a cold toy or something that baby can chew on to *"get the bites out"* before the nursing session.

- My [teething highlight](#) gives the low down on all things teething.
- [How to Soothe a Teething Baby](#) reel gives options other than chew toys.
- Here's some of my [favorite teethers](#) and how to [properly use them](#).

## 2. TRYING TO SLOW THE FLOW

If you notice that your little one is nursing well, but then all of a sudden is biting down as soon as a letdown happens, there's a good chance that baby is a bit overwhelmed with all that milk coming in and is trying to slow it down!

### TIPS:

- Try a different position that works against gravity to slow the flow during a letdown
- Try a reclined or side-lying position like suggested in [this reel](#)
  - (I made this reel about spitting up, but it has helpful positioning suggestions.)

## 3. TRYING TO SPEED UP THE FLOW

This may be one of the more painful scenarios, because when baby is trying to get more milk flowing, they will often *bite down and pull back*. This happens a lot towards the end of a nursing session when the milk has slowed but they're still hungry.

IT HURTS y'all, and I'm so sorry if you've had to experience this!

But as painful as it is, it's a reminder that babies are **SMART!!**

They instinctively know that stretching the nipple stimulates it and will trigger oxytocin - which can get another let down going!

If you're experiencing pain with this, the next step is to work to get baby unlatched. There's two options for this:

1. Place a finger in the corner of baby's mouth to break the seal.
2. Gently nestle baby's head into your breast - this will cause them to unlatch.

## 4. BABY ISN'T HUNGRY

If baby isn't hungry, they're not going to latch properly, if at all.

Biting might be their way of letting you know they're not quite ready! Sometimes we can confuse their cues, but if you see that baby isn't quite ready to eat, just let them play for a bit longer and try nursing again later.

Again, this is when **trial and error** will be important to figuring out what's happening and what solutions work for you both.

## 5. THEY'RE JUST BORED

It really could be as simple as baby is getting bored!

If you notice that biting is happening a lot at the end of sessions, this could likely be what's happening. Especially as they grow and are more attuned to what's happening around them, nursing might not be that interesting to them compared to all of the other exciting things happening around them.

Biting could be their way of letting you know they're bored with this nursing session and are ready to move on!

## 6. GETTING YOUR ATTENTION

If you're nursing and distracted, biting could be your baby's way of saying, "Hey! Mama! Look at me, pay attention to me!"

Babies are excellent communicators even though they can't speak. All of the things a baby does are ways they communicate to us what they need, want, or are feeling - including biting!

## WHAT DO I DO IN THE MOMENT?

It's *so difficult* to stay calm in every situation, and when a tiny mouth has gripped your nipple or breast with their teeth or hard gums, it takes practice to **remain calm** as the pain hits you.

**It's OK and normal to be upset, overwhelmed, or overstimulated in the moment.** It just takes practice for us as the parent to remain calm, even when these big feelings come up in us.

I don't always respond calmly, because sometimes it catches me off guard or just hurts a lot!

It is important though that we *learn* to remain calm, because strong reactions could do a few things.

1. For some babies, they think your big reaction is funny and will continue to bite to get the "funny" reaction from you.
2. For other babies, the big reaction can startle or scare them. \*Sometimes\* this can lead baby to associate negative feelings with nursing and could \*potentially\* cause a nursing strike. Which we *definitely* don't want!

Here's some reminders that hopefully help you find and hold your calm in those moments:

- Take a deep breath and **pause** to find your calm and remain responsive.
- If needed, calmly put baby down to let them know that this is not a place for biting.
- If needed, take a moment of space to calm your mind and body.
- When you're ready you could say something like, "It seems that you're needing to bite something right now. Here's a toy to chew on. We will try again in a bit."
- Have some good chew toys on hand! [Here's some of my favorites!](#)

Setting the boundary that biting doesn't happen here will be helpful for you and baby. Talking out loud to my baby usually helps me stay calm and it reminds myself that all is good, baby just needs to chew on something right now.

I know biting is a painful experience, so just remind yourself that it is just another way baby is trying to communicate what they might be needing! Pay attention to **when** the biting is happening to figure out **why** the biting is happening.

If you'd like to watch my highlight on biting, you can [check it out here!](#)

If you feel like you're needing more breastfeeding support in general, my [Breastfeeding Course](#) is available and will teach you all you need to know!

You've got this, Mamas!

xoxo,  
Kar