



fledglings

Finding Solutions Changing Lives

Many people with special needs will bite or chew, especially those on the Autistic spectrum. There may be a range of reasons for this such as frustration, stress, anxiety, the desire to communicate or the need for sensory stimulation. It can also be a reaction to feeling overwhelmed by their environment. Chewing or biting can also be a comforting activity, providing proprioceptive input.

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Biting & Chewing



Chewbuddy

Chewing Aids Can Help

- As an oral fidget aid for sensory seekers – provides a resilient chewable surface.
- They can be a safe alternative to chewing on hands, knuckles, cuffs and sleeves, shirts, pencils, etc.
- As an alternative to tooth grinding or thumb sucking.
- To practice biting/chewing safely by using a safe chewing aid, thus avoiding the risk of choking on inappropriate objects.
- To build oral strength and control.
- Can help with the urge to chew for individuals who are tube fed.

Chewing and biting behaviour can manifest in the sucking of clothing, particularly at the cuffs and necks of garments as well as the chewing of fingers and other inedible objects. This form of self-stimulating behaviour is called 'stimming'. Chewing aids are one way of safely redirecting this behaviour by changing the object on which the person chews to a safer alternative. They can also help strengthen muscles in the mouth and encourage the chewing skills needed for eating and speech. If you need advice, an occupational or speech and language therapist should be able to give you more information.

Types of Chewing Aids

- **Chew Bangles, oral aids worn on the wrist.** Usually made of high grade and resilient material such as medical grade silicone or Therma Elastic Polymer these chewing aids, worn on the wrist, are ideal for those who have a tendency to chew on their cuffs, wrists or fingers. There is range of styles on the market – some have textured surfaces for added sensory stimulation, others may be stretchy or come in a variety of colours and shapes. They can be worn singly or in groups. Be aware that the firmness of the material used varies and some may be more suitable for a strong bite than others. It is best to check with the manufacturer or supplier as well as your OT if you have any queries as to what would be best for you. It is also a good idea to check the product and wash it regularly. Even the strongest material will eventually show signs of wear, especially if the user has a strong bite. If the bangle or chewing aid becomes damaged it should always be replaced.

Severe biting and chewing can lead to physical damage to the tissues on the arms, hands and fingers. Every individual's experiences and behaviour will be different so in instances of severe biting, it may be best to seek professional advice. Biting and chewing can also be related to physical discomfort, pain in the mouth or another medical issue. If you suspect this may be the case, please seek specialist medical or dental advice.

- **Chew Pendants, Necklaces.**

Not everybody gets on with wearing a bangle on the wrist, some people may find wearing a chewing aid around the neck more comfortable to use. The pendant, suspended from a cord or lanyard should have a quick release clasp. Chew Pendants, should always be used with adult supervision and are not suitable for children under 36 months, as the cord can constitute a choking hazard. There are different styles and colours to choose from, some have variable levels of hardness while others have a textured surface to give an extra sensory input. Please check the pendant regularly and replace if it shows signs of wear.

- **Chewing aids.**

There are many other different types of chewing aid such as the Chewy Tubes, Super Chews, P's and Q's, and Chew Buddies. They are tactile and designed to be comfortable to hold in the hand and mouth - some have grip like 'handles' for example. They come in a range of different levels of hardness while others have textured or ridged surfaces for added oral stimulation. If you are unsure, an OT should be able to advise you on the most suitable product. It may be that if your child has a particularly strong bite they will need a tougher chewing aid made from a more resistant material. Again, you would need to check the chewing aid regularly and replace it if it is damaged.



Chewy Tubes



Superchew



Disc Pendants

We recommend that all chewing aids are used with adult supervision and are replaced once they show signs of wear. Please inspect the chewing aid regularly and wash with warm soapy water.

• **Neckerchiefs with chewing aid.**

Some bibs and neckerchiefs available incorporate a chewing aid at the tip. This means that the neckerchief/bib acts as a dribble bib as well as a chewing aid. The chew part is less likely to be lost as it is fixed to the neckerchief, however these items may not be suitable for those with a very strong bite.



Information on challenging behaviours, such as biting and chewing.

National Autism Society
www.autism.org.uk/challengingbehaviour
Autism Helpline: 08088 004104

Challenging Behaviour Foundation
www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/

T: 01799 541807
e: enquiries@fledglings.org.uk
www.fledglings.org.uk

Fledglings has a wide range of Chewing Aids available at reasonable prices.

Our helpline staff will be happy to help if you have any further queries.

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