

# Sensational Toddler/Preschool OT Tip of the Month

## Mouthing

**Do you know toddlers/preschoolers that ...**

1. Put everything in their mouth?
2. Chew on their clothing?
3. Have difficulty giving up their pacifier?

**Consider this...** Children may be using their mouth to explore their world rather than using hand exploration. For young children, mouthing is expected behavior, but the drive for oral exploration should decrease as hand skills increase. Mouthing can also be a way of soothing or organizing themselves through sucking or chewing. For some it is a coping tool to use when experiencing a new challenge or stressor.

### **Sensational ideas for mouthing.**

1. Provide “mouth fidgets” like chew tubes, pendants, chewelry or teethers. (Redirect to a safe option saying “looks like you need something to chew”)
2. Offer chewy foods, gum or a drink through straw cup.
3. Encourage supervised play in varied tactile materials for increased hand exploration.
4. Expand hand skills as expected for the age of the child.
5. Examine what stressors may be eliciting the need to soothe – fatigue, hunger or an overstimulating environment. What needs can be met in other ways?

For more info: Google “special needs chewable toys” for various oral options.

Go to [www.cintiOTinstitute.com/privateschools](http://www.cintiOTinstitute.com/privateschools) and scroll to the bottom left corner for more tip sheets.

For information about occupational therapy services at COTI go to [www.cintiOTinstitute.com](http://www.cintiOTinstitute.com).

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