



Tweddle

child + family health service

PARENTING WITH CONFIDENCE



moving from cot to bed

Most children move from sleeping in a cot to a bed between the age of two and three and a half years. Signs of readiness for a 'big bed' include climbing out of the cot or needing to get to the toilet at night. Stick to your child's normal bedtime routine.

Moving from cot to bed is an exciting milestone in a child's life. However, making the change is sometimes tricky. It may be hard to know whether or not your child is ready to move from a cot to a bed.

A new baby

It may be necessary to move your toddler into a bed so that the cot is available for your new baby. Issues to consider include:

If possible, make the transition from cot to bed a few months before the birth of your baby or a few months after. Otherwise, your toddler may resent the baby coming into the house and immediately 'stealing' the cot.

Generally, a child younger than two is not emotionally or developmentally ready to sleep in a regular bed. You might consider keeping the cot for your toddler and buying a second cot for the baby.

If buying a second cot is not an option, try moving your toddler to a mattress on the floor so that rolling out is unlikely to hurt them.

Safety issues

A 'big bed' means your child can get in and out of bed when they want. This may present a few safety issues. Suggestions include:

Before you set up the bed, check your child's room for possible hazards. Could they tangle themselves in the curtain cords? Could they open the window and fall out? Does your house have stairs? Address any safety issues first.

Your child should be at least nine years old before you allow bunk beds. Children can occasionally fall out of bed in their sleep. A fall from a top bunk could cause injury. A young child who is told to sleep in the bottom bunk may climb to the top bunk when parents aren't around.

Reduce the risk of falls by pushing one side of the single bed flush against a wall. Buy a removable guardrail that tucks under the unprotected side of your child's mattress. When you set up the bed, explain to your child that the guardrail prevents them from rolling out.

Let them practice rolling against the guardrail a few times before their first night in the 'big bed' to reassure them that they can't fall out.

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A quick transition is best

- Some parents set up the child's bed but leave the old cot in the room just in case. This is not necessary. A child who feels daunted at the thought of sleeping in a bed may insist on continuing to sleep in the cot. It is better to make a quick transition. Suggestions include:
- Let your child help pick out sheets and doona covers for their new bed.
- Involve your child in setting up the bed and packing up the cot.
- Let your child know you are excited and proud of them. Praise them for being grown up and making the move.
- Find ways to celebrate the move. For example, you could have a family trip to the zoo or an afternoon tea party for extended family members.
- Consider marking the transition by redecorating your child's room. It doesn't need to cost a lot; just changing the pictures on the wall or covers on cushions will make the room look different. Involve your child in planning and decorating their new 'big kid' bedroom.

Common problems

Some children are unsettled the first few nights in a bed. Suggestions include:

- Stick to your child's familiar bedtime routine.
- Allow your child to choose two items for bed that they find reassuring, such as soft toys. Your child may want to sleep with an item from the cot such as a special blanket.
- Try not to be impatient or cross if your child keeps getting out of bed. Be loving and reassuring. Accompany them back to bed. Offer lots of hugs. Say goodnight and tell them that it's time to go to sleep. Be prepared to go through this routine quite a few times over the next few nights, if necessary.
- Remember that arguing with your child and punishing them for getting out of bed will increase their anxiety and prolong the difficulties. Staying kind and loving will help with the transition.

Remind your child that the cot is packed up (don't mention that it is going to the new baby) if they ask for it back. Reassure your child and praise them for being a 'big kid'. Let them know that their new bed will soon feel familiar and cosy.

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