

Gradual withdrawal



NHS Borders
Children & Young People's Occupational Therapy



Welcome back to our mini-series. In this short video we will be showing you how to use gradual withdrawal to promote independence with settling at bedtime.

When to use gradual withdrawal.

Some children find it hard to go to sleep unless a parent or carer is in the bed or bedroom beside them.

This may mean that the child is spending all night in the parents bed, or a parent or carer is having to spend long periods of time in the child's bedroom.

All families will have different preferences around co-sleeping. It is important to do what works for you. The advice in this video is there only for those who wish to make changes. Gradual withdrawal is a way of gradually pulling away from your child at bedtime at a pace they are comfortable with and does not raise anxiety.

The key thing to remember with gradual withdrawal is each stage may take some time. It is important to ensure you have chosen a time to implement this sleep programme which works for everyone and allows you to see it through to the end. If it does not feel like a good time for the family or there are other big events such as an important transition happening, then this may not be the right time.

However, if everyone agrees then the following steps should be followed.



How much contact does your child need

Offer a substitute



Firstly, think about how much physical contact your child requires for settling- do they need to be cuddled/held or tickled or are they happy just with your presence in the room?

If a high level of close physical contact is required, we need to think about substituting this for something else- a teddy, blanket or an item of your clothing can be helpful.

Try to progress to sitting on the edge of the bed or by the bed instead of being on the bed. Ensure you are comfortable as you may have to sit for some time.

Try not to engage in conversation with the child reinforcing that it is bedtime and time for sleep.

If the child gets up/sits up just gently prompt them to lie back down

You want to carry out each stage until the child is managing to settle consistently with this level of input.

What next?

- **Begin to move further away**
- **Keep consistent**
- **There will be the odd blip- this is normal**



When you feel like you are making progress with the initial stages of gradual withdrawal you can start to move further away

Following the same steps just begin to move your position further away from the child, for example move your chair a little bit further away from the bed every few nights.

If the child's anxiety raises, then don't worry if you have to go back a step or two and start coming away again.

Every child is different.

Some will adapt quickly while others will take much longer.

The key thing to remember is to be consistent, keep the routine the same and ensure the child understands what is happening and why.

It is normal for there to be the odd blip/night which feels like a disaster- start again the next time! Don't be too hard on yourself it can be tough and exhausting.

So....what helps?



How To Contact Us...



Prior to contacting the service, we suggest you explore our resources online and on Facebook;



www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/cypot



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Advice and support can be sought from the service by contacting the team directly using our Enquiry Line or via our Enquiry Email Inbox.



01896 826033 (voicemail)



Paediatric.OTEnquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk

We will aim to contact you within 5 working days to discuss your enquiry