

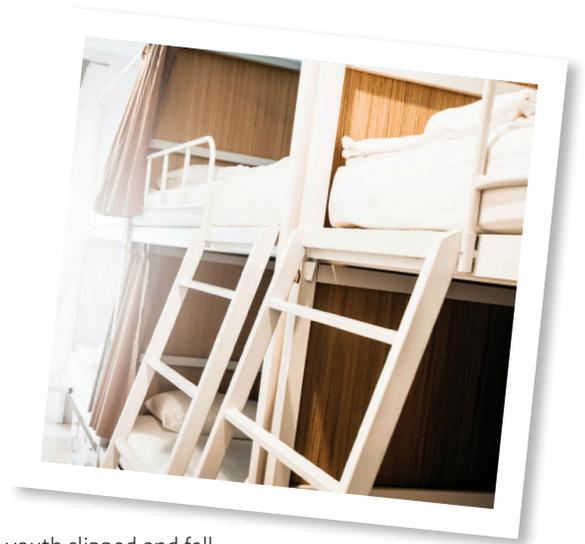
Safety Tips

Bunk Bed Safety

Sleeping in a bunk bed can be kind of fun. For kids, climbing up a ladder and sleeping within arm's reach of a cabin's ceiling is a pretty neat experience: it's a different way of seeing the cabin, and sleeping in the top bunk is rightfully taken as a sign that a youth is mature enough for Scouters to trust them with the privilege.

It's important not to overlook what makes sleeping on an upper bunk special, however: there is a very real element of risk. Every year, Scouting youth are seriously injured when they forget to act safely when in a bunk bed. Injuries reported to Safe Scouting in the last two years include concussions, dental injuries, a broken wrist and a broken neck.

A recent incident highlighted just how serious a bunk-bed-related accident can be. A youth sleeping in a top bunk woke up in the night needing to go to the washroom. In sock feet, the youth started down the bunk bed's ladder. It was dark in the cabin, and the youth slipped and fell to the floor, hitting his head and fracturing his femur. The injury required surgery, and the youth faced a lengthy recovery.



Follow these safety tips to make bunk bed incidents like this one less likely:

- **Share a safety talk.** When youth arrive at their cabin, share a safety talk. Remind youth in top bunks to be mindful of the space between the bed and the wall, watch their heads and to follow the other best practices outlined in this safety tip.
- **Treat bunk beds as beds—not play structures.** Youth should not spend time in top bunks except to sleep, and only one youth should be in the top bunk at a time. Even quiet activities like reading or playing cards should be shared elsewhere (like on a lower bunk).
 - Take advantage of lower bunks first, and only use top bunks when necessary.
 - Most importantly, *always use the ladder when climbing in and out of the top bunk.*
- **Ensure top bunks are equipped with safety rails.** All Scouts Canada properties should have bunk beds outfitted securely with safety rails. However, safety rails should be inspected before beds are used. Note that bunk beds on private properties may not be equipped with safety rails; if this is the case, these top bunks cannot be used.
 - If you notice damaged or otherwise unsafe bunkbeds on a Scouts Canada property, please send an email to properties@scouts.ca.
- **Stay below the safety rail.** Mats should not be stacked higher than the safety rail—the safety rail should extend high enough above the sleeper to serve its purpose of stopping a youth from rolling or slipping out of the top bunk.
- **Inform parents.** Let parents know if bunk beds will be used on a camp. Some parents might ask that their children not sleep in top bunks—often with good reason (e.g. sleepwalking).
- **Dress and pack on the floor.** Youth sleeping in top bunks should get changed (whether for bed or for the day) on the floor. Likewise, sleeping bags should be packed on the floor—not on the top bunk.
- **Climb in bare feet.** Bunk bed ladders should not be climbed in slippery sock feet. Booties and slippers without treaded soles also pose a risk. Bare feet offer better grip on a ladder, making it less likely for a youth to slip and fall.
- **Face the ladder.** Facing in to the ladder ensures most of the foot is on the ladder rungs—not just the heel.
- **Be prepared for dark.** Youth in top bunks should keep headlamps or flashlights in a secure and handy place, so that they do not have to climb out of bed in the dark.
- **Know how to react to a fall.** Youth who fall from bunk beds can hurt themselves any number of ways—however, hitting one's head is an injury that's more likely to occur than others. Know how to [recognize and respond appropriately to a suspected concussion](#).
 - For more information about head safety, check out [Scouts Canada's Head Safe resources](#).