Sleep & Wake-up Routines with FASD – Adolescents

Adapted from *Strategies not Solutions* - NOFASD Australia. For deeper guidance and practical strategies, see the full booklet.

What's important to understand

Adolescents with FASD may:

- continue to have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or waking
- experience irregular or disrupted sleep patterns
- struggle with transitions between sleep and daily activities
- be sensitive to light, sound, touch or noise
- want more independence while still needing sleep-related support
- appear "awake" but not fully ready to function

These patterns are linked to brain-based and sensory differences, not motivation, attitude or effort. Mental health and emotional wellbeing can also affect how adolescents fall asleep, stay asleep and wake.

What can help

A calm, predictable sleep environment

A simple, low-stimulation bedroom can help reduce sensory overload and support settling.

Consistent sleep and wake routines

Using the same routine, order and cues for sleep and waking, even on weekends, supports regulation.

Support with settling

Clear, familiar wind-down routines (such as calm activities or a warm shower) can help the body transition toward sleep.

Sensory-informed comfort

Some adolescents benefit from specific sensory supports such as preferred bedding, consistent textures or calming input.

Support with waking

Predictable, supported wake-up routines can help adolescents transition from sleep to starting the day.

What can make it harder

- Sudden changes to routine
- Late-night stimulation or screen use
- Expecting quick transitions from sleep to independence
- Assuming readiness based on age rather than support needs

When to seek extra support

If sleep difficulties are ongoing or affecting daily life, it's important to seek guidance from a health professional, particularly where individualised support or medication may need to be involved.

A strengths-based reminder: Every adolescent with FASD is unique. Adolescents do best when sleep and waking supports respect dignity, developing independence and individual needs. Families bring valuable insight into what works, and strategies may change over time.

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