# **Sleep & Wake-up Routines** with FASD – Babies & Infants

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

## What's important to understand

Babies & Infants with FASD may:

- have difficulty settling, sleeping or waking
- experience irregular sleep patterns
- become easily overwhelmed by light, sound, touch or smell
- arch, stiffen or become distressed when being held
- be fussy, colicky or difficult to soothe
- struggle to adapt to changes in routine

These patterns are linked to brain-based and sensory differences, not caregiver approach or effort. Emotional wellbeing and stress can also influence how babies sleep and settle.

## What can help

### A calm, predictable sleep environment

A simple, low-stimulation sleep space with minimal clutter can help babies feel safe and supported to settle.

### Consistent sleep and wake routines

Using the same routine, order and cues for sleep and waking helps babies learn what comes next.

### Support with settling

Slow, calming transitions and familiar bedtime rituals (for example, a warm bath) can help babies regulate, even if settling takes time.

### Sensory-informed comfort

Some babies settle better with firm wrapping, a sleeping bag or preferred bedding, and gentle up-and-down movement rather than side-to-side rocking.

### Support with waking

Gentle, predictable waking routines can help babies transition from sleep to being held, fed or changed.

## What can make it harder

- Sudden changes to routine
- Too much sensory input before sleep
- Frequent changes to sleep or feeding environments
- Expecting babies to adapt quickly to new routines or settings

## 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 baby with FASD is different. Babies do best when sleep and waking are supported with calm, consistent, and responsive care. Parents and carers know their baby best, and what works may change over time.

nofasd australia | NATIONAL ORGANISATION for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
1800 860 613
www.nofasd.org.au