

## Sleeping

Deafblind children may not easily establish regular patterns of sleep and wakefulness. This is particularly hard for you as parents and carers, as you also need adequate rest.

### Causes of difficulties

There may be a number of causes:

- your child may not understand the concept of day and night, particularly if your child has a severe visual impairment
- changing lighting conditions or 'busy' environments can make your child tired. They may close their eyes and shut out the world around them
- your child may need periods of rest or sleep during the day and this can then disrupt normal sleep patterns

### Approaches that may help

- Establish a regular routine for each day that your child is able to understand and anticipate. Periods when they are required to look and/or listen need to be kept short (initially 10-15 minutes or less)
- Reduce distractions in the environment and provide good lighting conditions. Remember that different children may require different lighting depending on their individual visual impairments
- Accept and acknowledge if your child indicates that they are tired - they may only need a few minutes to shut down before returning to an activity
- Ensure that they have planned opportunities for exercise and rest
- At the end of the day, introduce a consistent 'winding down' sequence of events that is mutually enjoyable. For example, dimmed lighting, a scented bath, being wrapped in a warm soft towel, a sequence of gentle massage and rocking songs
- A warm drink and biscuit or other light snack before bed may prevent hunger during the night and help to prolong periods of sleep
- Warm the bed and dim the lighting before entering the bedroom. This will encourage your child to snuggle and settle down (remember to remove water bottles or electric blankets before putting your child in bed).

Whilst problems persist, you should consider your own needs as carers. You may need to take opportunities for rest whenever you can, at whatever time your child is sleeping.