

FASD & SLEEP

The physiology behind sleep differences

FASD is a whole-body neurodevelopmental disorder. Prenatal alcohol exposure can affect systems regulating sleep, stress and physiological arousal.



HPA AXIS & CORTISOL

Altered stress response regulation and cortisol rhythms have been reported. Some pediatric studies found elevated afternoon and bedtime cortisol, potentially relevant to sleep onset. (Keiver, 2015)



AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

Prenatal alcohol exposure is associated with altered heart-rate variability and autonomic regulation. Difficulty settling after arousal is a plausible contributor to sleep disruption. (Jurczyk, 2019)



CIRCADIAN & MELATONIN REGULATION

Studies document abnormal evening melatonin profiles, fragmented sleep and reduced sleep efficiency. Sleep difficulties can involve both onset and maintenance. (Goril, 2016)



CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Sleep hygiene may help, but persistent symptoms warrant assessment of underlying sleep disorders, medication effects and sensory triggers. Consider sleep specialist evaluation when indicated.



ADAPT SUPPORT TO CAPACITY

A sleep plan should fit the person's ability to initiate, sequence and follow through. Build support into the routine to avoid steps that cause stress or increase arousal.

SELECTED REFERENCES

Keiver et al. Cortisol after prenatal alcohol exposure. Alcohol. 2015.
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