

## The Six Different (Asleep/Awake) States

### The States.

Baby experts describe babies as being in different states of sleep or wakefulness. Brazelton (1995). The Royal College of Midwives, 'A Helpful Guide to a Better Understanding of Your Baby's Behaviour' argues that babies regularly go through six different states, which are:

#### State 1 - Deep sleep state.

The baby's eyes are firmly closed: breathing is deep and regular with no arm or leg movement: This state gives the baby time to rest and grow.

#### State 2 - Light sleep state.

The baby's eyes are firmly closed but eye movement can be seen; there may be twitches; breathing is irregular and even shallow. Facial movements include smiles, grimaces, frowns, mouth movements and sucking.

#### State 3 - Drowsy, in-between state.

The baby's eyes may be open or closed but with a dazed appearance; arms and legs may move smoothly; breathing is regular but faster and shallower than in sleep. Babies in this state may be susceptible to being aroused to a more alert, responsive state.

#### State 4 - Alert, awake state.

The baby's body and face are relatively quiet but they seem able to focus on their mother, or an object with bright shining eyes. Sights and sounds will produce a response; in this state a baby can be very enjoyable for parents.

**Tip.** The baby will be responsive to the voice of its mother/parents. Try laughing, singing and having fun during this time. This is a good time to try massage.

#### State 5 - Alert, but fussy state.

This is the baby's transitional state to crying; they may be soothed or brought to a calmer state by an attractive stimulus. If the stimulus is too much, they make break down to fussiness; movements are jerky and disorganised.

#### State 6 - Crying.

Crying is a release of tension and a way of signalling a need. The baby communicates hunger, pain, boredom, discomfort or tiredness which sets off automatic responses of concern and responsibility in parents; this is the most effective way for the baby to attract attention. The baby is likely to be physically active.