

# Weighted Lap Blankets

## **What is a weighted lap blanket?**

Weighted lap blankets are custom-made blankets that evenly distribute weight across the blanket. They are generally placed over the child's lap and thigh. Research has shown that weighted lap blankets should not weigh more than 10% of the child's body weight to be effective and safe. Weighted blankets should never be used as a restraint. It is important that a blanket is never so heavy that the user feels trapped. The user must always be able to remove a weighted blanket on their own.

## **Theory behind weighted lap blankets.**

Weighted lap blankets provide deep pressure touch stimulation (DPTS). This is believed to release a chemical in the brain, which naturally calms. Massage and deep pressure releases both serotonin and endorphins. The serotonin acts as a calming mediator for the body while the endorphins act as a happy stimulator for the brain. Together they can bring pleasurable feelings and general elevated moods in both your body and mind. The therapy generates sensations in the body, such as those arising from hugging, cuddling, squeezing, stroking, or holding. This input is believed to have a physically calming and organising effect on children resulting in positive behavioural and functional changes.

## **Who Benefits By Using A Weighted Lap Blanket?**

People who have benefited from the deep pressure touch stimulation (DPTS) provided by a Weighted Blanket include those on the Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, ADD, Sensory Integration or Processing Disorder, Rett's Syndrome or have other sensory issues. The deep pressure provided by the weighted blanket helps to calm the individual allowing their body to relax.

### **Recommendations for use.**

- Weighted lap blankets do not work for all children and therefore a trial and error approach is required.
- Ensure all family members, educators and carers are aware of the correct use of the weighted lap blanket.
- Introduce the weighted lap blanket slowly to the child encouraging them to use it for short periods of time.
- Use the weighted lap blanket at times when the child is required to be calmer and sit still – table experiences, mat time, reading.
- The weighted lap blanket should not be used for longer than 30 minutes at a time, but can be used several times throughout the day.
- Record the child's performance and behaviours during use of the blanket noting improvements/changes to their behaviour.