Sleep Difficulties

Sleep difficulties are often reported in Angelman syndrome.

Research studies have estimated that between 20-80% of children have difficulties with sleep, with the most problems occurring between two and six years of age. Clearly there is a huge difference in estimates across research studies and this most likely reflects the different ways researchers have collected information.

Sleep problems consistently reported in the literature include difficulties with falling asleep, reduced time asleep, waking up during the night. Additional reported sleep difficulties include sleep terrors, bed wetting (enuresis), teeth grinding (bruxism) and sleep walking (somnambulism).

In this video Tracey describes the sleep difficulties her daughter with Angelman syndrome experiences:

Research has suggested that sleep difficulties in Angelman syndrome do not vary across different genetic subtypes. Furthermore, epilepsy and gender have also not been linked to sleep problems in Angelman syndrome.

Sleep difficulties have not been found to affect daytime behaviour; however, only the impact on daytime alertness has been studied. Parents whose children sleep less are more likely to experience stress and lower levels of well-being.

Although no consistent association between sleep difficulties and age has been found, it has been suggested that sleep difficulties decrease into adulthood.

Sleep Interventions

There is limited evidence exploring whether behavioural interventions for sleep are effective in Angelman syndrome. However, behavioural interventions in children with intellectual disability without Angelman syndrome have shown success for a range of sleep difficulties, including sleep onset and total sleep time.

Only two research studies have examined behavioural interventions in Angelman syndrome. Overall these studies provide preliminary evidence that behavioural interventions may be effective. To read the details about these studies click below.
Sleep studies in Angelman syndrome

Melatonin is a medication that is sometimes prescribed for sleep and has shown to be useful for some individuals with intellectual disability.

Further Information:

For more information on the nature of sleep in children with intellectual disability, and what can be done to reduce or improve sleep problems, click here to read Cerebra’s guide.

For useful tips on how to address some of the sleep disturbances common in Angelman syndrome click here.

If you want help and advice on sleep issues in Angelman syndrome click here.