

## Social Skills in Angelman Syndrome

**A high frequency of laughing and smiling is a distinctive and frequently reported characteristic of individuals with Angelman syndrome.**

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### Laughing and smiling behaviour

Around 9 out of 10 of individuals with Angelman syndrome show smiling and/or laughing behaviour which may be related to adult social interaction. The frequency of laughing and smiling in Angelman syndrome is heightened in comparison to children with an intellectual disability without Angelman syndrome.

Chris Oliver and his research team at the [Cerebra Centre for Neurodevelopmental Disorders](#) found that children showed more laughing and smiling behaviours during adult interaction in comparison to when they were alone, where smiling and laughing behaviours seldom occurred. It was concluded that children with Angelman syndrome may have a heightened preference for adult social interaction, which has been supported by further research.

Smiling and laughing behaviours may serve as a way to maintain social interaction as research has shown that adults socially interact with children with Angelman syndrome for a longer period of time when this behaviour is displayed.

### Sociability in Angelman syndrome

Individuals with Angelman syndrome are highly socially motivated, with research showing that children with Angelman syndrome have high rates of social approach behaviours in comparison to children with Cornelia de Lange and Cri du Chat syndromes.

The frequency of social approach behaviours in individuals with Angelman syndrome does not appear to differ between familiar and unfamiliar adults, which may make some individuals particularly vulnerable, so teaching stranger awareness may be important. Stoppel & Anderson (2017): Research using mice with maternally-inherited deletions of UBE3A (that models Angelman syndrome) show an increased social preference duration in the three chamber approach task and an increased number of ultrasonic vocalisations and physical interactions when exposed to a novel female stimulus. Yet these same mice show a reduced exploration of a novel object.

## **Age-related changes in laughing and smiling**

Social behaviour in Angelman syndrome may change with age, with a decrease in the frequency of laughing and smiling behaviours in older children with Angelman syndrome, particularly around early adolescence. Nonetheless, the 8 out of 9 adults with Angelman syndrome are reported to show laughing and smiling behaviours between the ages of 20-53 years. Research exploring these changes is still ongoing.

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