

Childhood Stuttering

What Is Childhood Stuttering?

Stuttering is a problem that affects the normal flow of speech. It can cause speech to stop, or feel bumpy or forceful.

Stuttering often sounds like a sound, word or part of a word being repeated. Children may also blink their eyes fast, move their lips, have physical tension or avoid talking in public.

What Are the Signs of Stuttering?

The signs of stuttering may include:

- repeating words or part of a word (Example: "I...I...want")
- repeating sounds (Example: "li-li")
- holding out a word or sound (Example: "lll")
- appearing very tense or "out of breath" when talking.
- trying to talk and not being able to
- saying words such as "um" or "like"
- rearranging words in a sentence
- pretending to forget what he or she wanted to say
- not wanting to speak
- a strong fear or concern about speaking
- trying to hide his or her stuttering.

What Causes Stuttering?

The cause of stuttering is unknown. Some factors of stuttering include:

- family history of stuttering
- brain (neurological) differences
- your child's language skills (being able to understand and communicate with others)
- your child's motor planning skills (being able to coordinate movement to talk clearly).

What are the Different Types of Stuttering?

- **Developmental:** This type happens in young children while they are still learning to speak. It is the most common type of stuttering and typically happens between ages 2 ½ and 7.
- **Neurogenic:** This type happens after a stroke, head trauma or other type of brain injury. The brain, nerves and muscles have trouble communicating with each other.
- **Psychogenic:** This type is caused by emotional stress or problems with thought or reasoning.

(over)

Will Stuttering Affect Your Child's Performance in School?

Each child is different. It is possible that your child may have trouble communicating his or her thoughts and ideas in the classroom.

Your child may feel or tell you he or she feels scared, frustrated or embarrassed when speaking.

What Should You Do If You Think Your Child Has a Problem with Stuttering?

Call your pediatrician if you think your child stutters or has had trouble talking for 6 months or longer.

He or she may refer your child to a speech therapist (speech-language pathologist). He or she may evaluate your child's speech.

How is Stuttering Treated?

Treatment will be tailored to your child's and family's needs.

The goal of the treatment is to:

- stop or reduce stuttering
- improve coping skills and lower the stress your child might feel
- help with other speech skills.

What Is Your Role In Your Child's Treatment?

You may be asked to:

- not say "slow down" or "try again." Instead, speak slowly to your child to help him or her learn how to speak slow and relaxed.
- lower the number of questions you ask your child
- listen to "what" your child is saying and do not react to "how" he or she is saying it
- not use negative facial expressions or body language when your child stutters
- wait for your child to finish talking and do not finish his or her sentences
- help your family members learn to take turns talking and listening.

Each child responds differently to treatment. Your child's progress will depend on how bad the speech disorder is and your child's age.

You will play an important role in your child's care. Your child's speech therapist will ask you to watch your child at home. Support from family will make a difference in your child's treatment.