

What is stammering?



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Stammering is how we talk about a child's speech when they are affected in the following ways:

- Their speech is 'jerky' and gets stuck
- They can't seem to get started with talking (".....I want some juice")
- They repeat sounds in words e.g. 'sssstory'
- They repeat part of the word (e.g. mu-mu-mu-mummy)

What's the difference between stammering and stuttering?

They're exactly the same! The condition is often called 'stuttering' in North America and Australia and 'stammering' in the UK. We also talk about 'dysfluency' too and all these words mean the same thing.

What causes it?

There isn't one answer to this. Each child and family are unique, so we look at different factors. What we do know is that a family link can make children more vulnerable to stammering.

You can find out more information on the factors that make children more likely to stammer by following the links at the end of this factsheet.

Can I cause my child's stammer?

No! Parents are often worried that they have caused their child's stammer, but the short answer is 'no'.

I CAN Help enquiry service www.ican.org.uk/help

Call 020 7843 2544 to arrange a free phone call from one of our speech and language therapists or email enquiries@ican.org.uk

Talking Point www.talkingpoint.org.uk

Visit this website for information about children's communication.

Find out more about the background to stammering by contacting the British Stammering Association or Action for Stammering Children.

What should I do if I think my child is stammering?

You should see a speech and language therapist. You can find your local speech therapy service by going to the Talking Point website (www.talkingpoint.org.uk) and clicking on the 'Find Local Services' box. Usually you can refer yourself to speech therapy and you don't need to see your GP, Health Visitor or go through your child's school or nursery.

You can also see if there is a pattern to your child's stammering, e.g. are there times when they stammer more or less?

You can also try out some of the tips below.

Will it go away?

For 4 out of 5 children, it will go away. However, some children will continue to stammer, and will have a stammer as an adult.

What can I do to help my child?

- Give your child time to finish their sentences - however long it takes them to do this.
- Saying things like "I'm listening" and "there's no hurry" can be reassuring.
- You can reassure them by telling them that they have plenty of time, and that you understand that they are finding it hard. Try to avoid telling them to slow down or speed up, as they need to speak at their own pace. This can be hard if you have other children and a busy family life, so try to get everyone else to help so you're all using these tips.
- You can keep a diary to see when your child's stammer is better/worse. This way you can find out the situations your child finds hard, and what affects their stammer.
- Talk to your child's educational setting about their difficulties and share these strategies.

Find out more by going to:

The British Stammering Association www.stammering.org.uk

The Michael Palin Centre www.stammeringcentre.org

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