

Stuttering

What is Stuttering or Dysfluency?

- Stuttering, also known as dysfluency is a break in the smooth meaningful flow of speech.
- It is normal for young children (usually during pre school years) to have some dysfluencies such as pauses, repetitions, prolongations or additions in their speech. For example: Your child may occasionally repeat an "s" sound, syllable or word.
- It is normal for children to have some periods of fluency and some periods of dysfluencies. Sometimes dysfluencies can occur when a child is excited or tired. They may also be dysfluent if they feel rushed to speak or if there is a high demand/pressure to communicate. These dysfluencies can also occur for no apparent reason.
- However, some children do not outgrow this behaviour. Children who are **dysfluent** show a greater degree of speech interruptions. If your child stutters on more than 10 words out of 100 it may indicate that your child is stuttering.
- Only a speech pathologist trained in the diagnosis and treatment of stuttering is qualified to make this diagnosis as there are other factors to be considered when determining if your child is stuttering.

What are Dysfluencies

Types of Dysfluencies:

- Sounds, syllable or word repetitions (*ssssoup, ba ba baby, I I I want a*)
- Prolongations of sounds (*mmmmmmommy*)
- Interjections- extra sounds, syllables or words that add no meaning (*uh, well, like, you know*)
- Pauses or silent intervals of over two seconds
- Revisions- changing the pronunciation of a word or adding a word
- The amount and types of dysfluent behaviour may vary from day to day and across situations. Dysfluencies may increase when the child is tired, excited, apprehensive or trying to compete with other speakers.

Secondary Behaviours of Stuttering:

- Facial grimacing or muscle tension
- Rapid eye blinking, head/jaw movements or tension, irregular breathing patterns
- Abnormal pitch or loudness rising
- Avoidance of speaking situations and frustration when speaking

If secondary behaviours occur, there is a higher risk for development of stuttering.

Tips to promote fluency

- If your child mentions to you that they are anxious about their talking, encourage he/she to talk about it. Try to reassure them by explaining that a lot of children and even adults find talking difficult. **Do not** talk about his fluency in front of your child with another person.
- Show your child that you are interested in what they have to say and speak with them face to face. If you are busy, ask your child to wait and then give him/her your full attention.
- Listen to what your child is saying and not how they are saying it. Do **not** interrupt them. If you ask your child to “slow down”, “take a breath “ or “take it easy” they will begin to think you are not interested in what they are saying, only in how they are saying it.
- Give your child your undivided and unhurried attention so that they do not feel rushed to speak.
- Be positive and focus on things that your child does well rather than those things that they do not do as well. Make your child feel good!
- Establish turn taking rules for the family. Everyone gets a chance to talk. **No interrupting!**
- Do not ask too many questions or finish off your child's sentences. Avoid asking your child to “say...” or “tell...”.
- Speak to your child in simple, short sentences and pause for a second before responding.
- Keep your speech rate slow, relaxed and smooth and pause often. Be a good model for your child to imitate
- Try to slow down the pace of your household or environment you are in, if possible, as this will minimize the level of excitement.