

# STUTTERING

Stuttering is a motor-speech disorder and causes disruptions in speech fluency

Stuttering in children usually occurs between 2-5 years of age. Onset of stuttering may be sudden or gradual

Fluctuations in stuttering are common and come and go in a cycle.

Some children stop stuttering without any intervention, but many won't. At this stage it is not known which children will or won't recover without intervention

We do know that the earlier stuttering is treated the better the outcome

## MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT STUTTERING

Myth	Fact
Stuttering is an emotional problem caused by anxiety	Although the cause of stuttering is unknown, it is not an emotional disorder or the result of trauma or anxiety. Many people who stutter have a genetically inherited predisposition to stuttering. In other words, it is a physical condition. Situations that produce anxiety often make speech more difficult for everyone - whether or not they stutter
Stuttering is caused by copying the stuttered speech of other family members	Stuttering tends to run in families so it is usual to find more than one member of a family who stutters. However, the link is genetic rather than through imitation of someone else's speech
Stuttering is caused by the way parents interact with their children	Parents are the best people to help their children recover from stuttering. Stuttering does not develop because of poor parenting practices.
Stuttering is a normal part of a young child's speech development	Stuttering is a speech disorder. It may start gradually or suddenly. It nearly always starts before 5 years of age/
Children will grow out of stuttering as they grow older	Some children do stop stuttering without ever needing therapy from a clinic. However, many will continue to stutter and will require professional help. At present, there are no reliable indicators to predict which children will recover without help. Consultation with a speech pathologist is required
Children shouldn't have therapy for stuttering until they are at school	The best results in therapy have been achieved in preschool children
Therapy for stuttering can be stopped as soon as child speaks fluently	Therapy for stuttering must be withdrawn gradually. Research has shown that the maintenance phase of therapy is the most essential for preventing stuttering relapse.

# TYPES OF STUTTERING

## Repetitions

- Of sounds (e.g. “b-b-b-but I want that one”)
- Of parts of words (e.g. “lz-lz-lzzy has it”)
- Of whole words (e.g. “no-no-no I don’t want it”)
- Of phrases (e.g. “can I have it - can I have it”)

## Prolongations (stretching out of words and sounds)

- Of sounds (e.g. “ssssso what”)
- Of words (e.g. “beeecauuuuse it’s not yours”)

## Blocks

- A period of silence where the word is ‘stuck’, the child is trying to speak but nothing comes out

## Non-verbal Features (Secondary Characteristics)

- Eye-blinking
- Foot stamping
- Hand clenching
- Head shaking
- Others

# STRATEGIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD'S STUTTERING

Do	Don't
Act relaxed and unconcerned when your child stutters as we don't want to make them anxious about it	Do NOT ignore your child's stuttering and hope they will grow out of it. Contact a Speech Pathologist for more advice.
If your child is very stuck on. word, you may want to try and predict what they are going to say. However, only do this if your child responds well to it	Don't criticise your child's talking e.g. “speak properly”
Treat your child as you would a normal speaker	Don't show disapproval in your voice or facial expressions. They need to be encouraged for trying, not failing.
Allow your child enough time to talk, don't hurry them or make them feel under pressure	Don't place your child in situations that place a lot of pressure on them. This may include speaking in front of unfamiliar people, speaking a lot when tired etc.
If there are other children around, help your child to be heard by asking others to wait until they are finished	Don't continue giving feedback to your child if they respond negatively
Listen to WHAT is being said not just HOW it's said	
If your child is particularly dis fluent, consider narrowing their responses by giving them a choice of two, or asking questions that only require short responses (e.g. would you like some apple or banana? What is this?)	

# FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

**What is Stuttering? Australian Stuttering research centre:**

<https://www.uts.edu.au/research/centres/australian-stuttering-research-centre/information-about-stuttering>

**Say Australia: Frequently Asked Questions About Stuttering:**

<https://www.sayaustralia.org.au/stuttering-101/>

**Speak Easy Association Australia: About Stuttering:**

<https://speakeasy.org.au/stuttering/>