



Talk With Me
Early Language Services

Childhood Stuttering



WHEN SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

- If the child starts stuttering after 3 ½ years of age
- If the stuttering lasts 6+ months
- If the child expresses concerns about their speech
- If the child is showing other behaviors while stuttering like:
 - Eye blinking
 - Stomping their feet
 - Grimacing
 - Head jerking
- If there is a family history of stuttering
- If the child is a boy. Girls are more likely than boys to outgrow stuttering. In fact, three to four boys continue to stutter for every girl who stutters.
- If the stuttering looks like it requires effort or is tense

What is stuttering?

Stuttering is when a child repeats parts of a word (li-li-like this), making a word longer (lllllike this), or stops in the middle of a word. May also include hesitations and the use of fillers such as “uh”, “er”, “um”.

Children who stutter are **not** more shy or nervous and stuttering is **not** caused by thinking or talking too fast.

Is this normal or is not?

Many children between 1 ½ and 5 years go through periods where they pause when they talk, repeat a word/syllable or use fillers such as “uh” “er” and “um” (i.e. have dysfluent speech). This can be normal when they are learning to use language in a new way such as a sudden increase in the number of words that they are using, or they are starting to use language in new ways (like telling stories).

Normal dysfluencies will only last a couple of months, so children will grow out of them quickly. See the box “when should I be concerned?” to find out if your child is experiencing “normal dysfluencies” or if they may be stuttering.

It is best to get help early if there are any concerns.

If your child has been stuttering for more than three months call us to speak with a speech-language pathologist: 1-866-423-8800

What can I do to help my child?

There are many things that you can do to help your child talk whether or not they stutter.

1. Use a slow, calm and relaxed speech when you talk to them. To slow down your speech, try waiting a few seconds after your child finishes speaking before you speak.
2. Ask fewer questions, especially question that are testing what your child knows.
3. Set aside a few minutes at a regular time each day when you can give your undivided attention to your child.
4. Help all members of the family learn to take turns talking and listening
5. Show your child that you accept him as he is. Try not to get frustrated if the stuttering gets worse.
6. Give your child lots of time to finish his thoughts no matter how bumpy his speech becomes.
7. If your child's speech is especially bumpy, and they are aware of it, you can say: "It was hard to get that word out wasn't it? Sometimes I have bumpy talking too."
8. Try to have fewer activities that may cause tension, excitement or stress as these may cause more stuttering. When your child is upset, overtired or excited suggest quiet activities so they can relax and not feel pressured to talk. Try some of these calm and fun activities:
 - Sing songs and do nursery rhymes
 - Read stories together
 - Listen to music and dance
 - Do puzzles or crafts

Famous People Who Stutter

- **Emily Blunt** — actress
- **Samuel L. Jackson**— actor
- **Nicole Kidman** — actress
- **B.B. King** — guitarist, singer/songwriter
- **Marilyn Monroe** — actress and singer
- **Charlie Sheen** — actor
- **Ed Sheeran** — singer/songwriter
- **Bruce Willis**—actor
- **Kendrick Lamar** — hip-hop artist
- **Elvis Presley** — singer and actor
- **Shaquille O'Neal** — former NBA player
- **Tiger Woods** — golfer
- **Winston Churchill** — former British prime minister



Things to avoid

- Don't say "slow down" or "take a deep breath" and "start over"
- Avoid interruption, filling in words or finishing what the child is saying
- Avoid pointing out your child's stuttering if they are not aware of it
- Don't tease: don't allow other children to tease and avoid doing it yourself
- Be aware if you are making your child speak. Avoid performance