

Stammering in older children

Stammering is the same as stuttering. A stammer affects the fluency of speech and may involve repetitions of sounds (e.g. 'b..b..b..ball'), prolongation of sounds, (e.g. 'SSSSaturday') or blocks where the word is stuck and does not come out. For some children, stammering continues into adulthood.

- Around 5% of children and 1% of adults stammer.
- More boys stammer than girls.
- Stammering can lead to frustration and anxiety about speaking.
- Stammering can be genetic, so may run in families.

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TOP TIPS

- Be open about stammering and give time to talk.
- Focus on what your child says rather than how they say it and follow your child's lead in conversation.
- Reduce the speed of your own talking and pause frequently.
- Make sure all family members give each other time to talk.
- Check with your child if they want to talk about their stammer. Some children want to and others don't.
- Ask your child what they would like you to do and how you can help and support them when they stammer, this may vary depending on the day, situation etc.

More information

- Think about the talking 'demands' you and others may put on your child and make changes if needed (e.g. you might decide to reduce the questions you ask and comment instead).
- Talk to your child about school and social situations. Do they feel pressured to speak? Do they want you to talk about their stammer with their teachers?
- Stammering can vary and may be more noticeable when your child is tired, emotional, or in certain situations. Talk about this with your child if they would like to and together think about what might help.
- Be aware that stammering might be 'covert' (hidden). Your child might put a lot of effort into changing words and avoiding stammering which can be hard work and increase their anxiety about talking.

The following websites have further information and advice:

www.stamma.org – the British Stammering Association advice pages for parents and children.

www.actionforstammeringchildren.org

www.whittington.nhs.uk – the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering.

www.nhs.uk