

Stammering in young children

Stammering is the same as stuttering. A stammer affects the fluency of speech and may involve repetitions of sounds (e.g. 'mu..mu..mummy'), prolongation of sounds, (e.g. 'mmmmmmummy') or blocks where the word is stuck and cannot come out. It usually starts between the ages of 2 and 5.

- Around 5% of children stammer and 1% of adults.
- More boys stammer than girls.
- Stammering can lead to frustration and anxiety about speaking.
- Stammering is often genetic – it can run in families.

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TOP TIPS

- Give your child time to talk.
- Reduce the speed of your own talking and pause frequently.
- Try to give your child daily 1:1 time where you listening and respond to them and follow their lead.
- Listen to what they say rather than how they say it.
- Don't be afraid to talk about their stammer with them, particularly if they get upset / frustrated. Use words that they will understand, e.g. 'That was tricky', 'That got a bit stuck didn't it', 'That was a bit bumpy' or 'That was very smooth'.

More information

- Children tend to say more when they are talking about their own ideas rather than responding to direct questions. Instead of questioning try commenting on what your child says.
- Encourage all adults and children in your home to take turns talking and listen to one another.
- It is normal for stammering to vary. Sometimes you may not notice it and sometimes it might affect every word your child says. Are there any patterns, e.g. is it more noticeable when they are tired / anxious / talking to specific people or in specific situations?
- It is not your fault that your child stammers but small changes to their environment can really help.

The following websites have further information and advice:

www.stamma.org/get-support/parents – the British Stammering Association website

www.actionforstammeringchildren.org/support/for-parents

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

www.nhs.uk