

Stammering

What is it?

A stammer is a stop in the flow of speech. There are three different types of stammer:

- Repetitions – where sounds or syllables are repeated, eg. b-b-ball.
- Prolongations – where sounds are elongated, eg. sssswings.
- Blocks – where sounds, syllables or words get stuck and then seem to 'burst' out.

Each child will stammer in a different way and stammering can be one or more of the



How to Help

- Give the child plenty of **time** to speak – don't interrupt or try to finish off sentences.
- Keep **looking** at the child, even when he/she is stammering.
- Do **NOT** correct speech or language errors.
- Keep your speech rate **slower**.
- Keep your sentences shorter and **simpler**.
- Reduce the number of direct questions you ask – do not ask too many questions.
- Keep **calm** and relaxed – do not show any anxiety or impatience.
- Try to keep a **diary** of when your child stammers more or less. If you notice situations where the child stammers less, build these activities into your daily routine as much as possible.
- Have a **quiet time** after school to relax and talk later.
- If there are a lot of people talking at once, encourage **turn taking**.

Causes

There is no known cause of stammering. There are a number of possible explanations. It is caused by a number of factors working together and these factors will be different for each child. The main factors are grouped in the following categories:

- Physical – eg. family history, development, coordination.
- Linguistic – eg. language development, speech sounds.
- Environmental – eg. family, school, home.
- Psychological – eg. worrier, perfectionist.



Facts about Stammering:

- There is no one cause and therefore no 'cure'.
- It has been found in all socio-economic and cultural groups and at all levels of intelligence.
- It usually occurs between the ages of 2 and 5 years.
- Some children overcome the stammering and others need some help. A small percentage will continue to stammer as an adult.

What can make it worse?

- When they are tired
- When they are excited
- When they are nervous or anxious
- When they think they will be interrupted
- When they are unwell
- When they are competing for your attention
- When they are in a rush and have a lot to say