

# Stuttering in Young Children

## A Guide for Parents

### What is stuttering?

Stuttering (sometimes called “dysfluency”) refers to speech that is not smooth or flowing.

Some examples are:

- Repeating phrases

For example: “Do you know, do you know, do you know what I saw?”

- Repeating words

For example: “And and and I want it.”

- Repeating parts of words

For example: “B-b-b-but I can’t.”

- Lengthening sounds

For example: “I waaaant ice cream.”

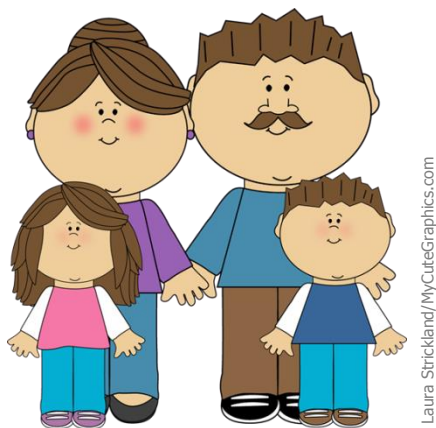
- Blocking

Airflow stops, and the word seems to get stuck in the mouth.

For example: “B----all”

- Using pauses or filler words

For example: “Because.... I want... well... I want ice cream.”



### Is it normal for my child to stutter?

Many preschool-aged children go through a phase of stuttering. It is a normal part of learning to talk. It usually occurs when children are starting to speak in longer, more complicated sentences.

### Will my child stop stuttering?

Most children grow out of stuttering, on their own, within about six months of when it started. Some children do not. Children are at greater risk to continue stuttering when:

- It starts after the age of four
- It lasts longer than a year
- It becomes more severe over time
- There is a family history of stuttering

### Should I refer my child for speech therapy?

Yes. It is important to refer all children who stutter to a Speech-Language Pathologist.

A speech-language pathologist can teach you ways to help your child when they stutter.

A speech-language pathologist can monitor your child’s risk factors.

A speech-language pathologist can provide therapy, if the stuttering continues.

Early intervention is the key!

### How can I help my child when they stutter?

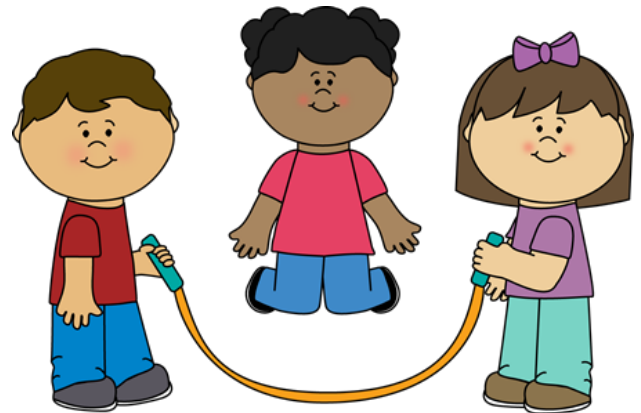
- **Speak slowly with your child:** This is more useful than *telling* your child to slow down.
- **Give your child time to finish what they are saying.** Try not to interrupt or finish sentences for them.
- **Take pauses.** This slows down the conversation, and shows your child that it's okay to plan what you say before you speak.
- **Make sure your child gets a turn to talk.** At the dinner table or in a noisy group of children, give everyone a turn to talk. Keep the conversation at a slow pace.
- **Beware of questions.** Difficult questions can put pressure on your child, for example "What did you do at daycare today?" Instead, try a choice question. This gives your child a possible response, for example, "What did you do at daycare today - play with blocks or play outside?"
- **Avoid asking your child to talk.** This can put pressure on your child to perform, for example, "Tell Grandma what you did at preschool today". If your child does not want to speak, let them be quiet.

### Finally....

Lots of things can affect stuttering. Some children stutter more when they are:

- around new people or in new places
- tired
- sick
- scared
- excited
- angry
- feeling rushed

You can't always control these things. It's okay to let your child stutter or let your child talk less at these times, and do a quiet activity, like colouring.



Laura Strickland/MyCuteGraphics.com

**For more information**  
Contact your Speech-Language Pathologist  
or  
Your local Public Health Unit