



Does my child stutter?

What is stuttering?

- Stuttering is the frequent interruption of the natural flow of speech.
- It is common for children to go through a developmental period of disfluent speech.

Warning signs

note: *The first three signs may occur occasionally in typically developing children. All of these symptoms may come and go.*

1. **repeating sounds & words**: It is common for children to repeat parts of words (c-c-cat run), words (Can can can I go?), and phrases (I want I want I want cookie). It might be a cause for concern if this occurs frequently with many words in many situations.
2. **schwa vowel**: The schwa is the weak “uh” vowel found in words like, “suggest” and “under.” A child that has a possibility of developing a stutter may use the “uh” sound to distort words. For example “goat” would be said, “guh-guh-guh-goat” and “over” would be said, “uh-uh-uh-uh-over.”
3. **prolongations**: Some children may prolong or “hold on to” the first sound of a word. For example, the word “mommy” becomes “mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmommy.”
4. **tremors**: Small muscles around your child’s mouth and jaw may tremble or shake when your child seems to “get stuck” on words. You also may see your child’s mouth open in one position without making any sounds as she/he is trying to say a word.
5. **raise in pitch and/or loudness**: Your child’s pitch (high and low sounds) and/or loudness may jump or slide upward.
6. **struggle and tension**: You may see muscles in your child’s face become tight and tense as they struggle to talk. This tension may be slight or extreme.
7. **fear or frustration**: You may see or hear your child express their fear or frustration they have with talking.
8. **avoidance**: Your child may become afraid to talk and may avoid talking in some situations or may avoid saying certain words.

My child has some warning signs. Now what?

If you are concerned, you can make an appointment with a speech-language-pathologist (SLP) for an evaluation to determine if your child needs treatment for stuttering. The therapist will probably ask you some questions about your child's history (developmental milestones, medical history, speech development, etc.) The therapist may ask to videotape your child talking to you or may ask you to bring in a video from home. During the evaluation, the SLP will observe your child's speech fluency, speech sounds, grammar, and vocabulary. Sometimes your child may stutter more at home than during the evaluation. If this happens tell the SLP and describe what your child does at home. Feel free to ask the SLP any questions you may have during the evaluation.

What can I do to help my child?

These suggestions will help encourage social development of any child and will help your child if you have a concern about his/her speech.

- Pay attention to what your child has to say.
- Don't rush your child when he/she is talking.
- Try not to interrupt your child when she/he is talking.
- Make talking fun by talking about topics she/he is interested in.
- Read and tell stories to your child.

Resources:

Information from this article was referenced from:

Stuttering Foundation (2002), *If your child stutters: A guide for parents*, 6th ed.

Websites:

<https://stutteringhelp.org>

<https://westutter.org>