



SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Early years

Supporting

STAMMERING

in your setting



WHAT IS STAMMERING?

Stammering which begins in early childhood is known as developmental stammering. In young children stammering is not uncommon. Stammering, or stuttering, affects up to 8% of children, normally between the ages of two and seven. In most children this will be short-lived.

STAMMERING CAN BE...

Repeating

Repeating parts of words several times "Mu-mu-mumummy"

Stretching

Stretching sounds "I want a sssstory"

Blocking

Getting stuck on the first sound of a word so no sound comes out for a few seconds "...I got a teddy."

Effortful

A child may put extra effort into saying specific sounds or words. You may notice tension around the eyes, lips and jaw. They may hold their breath or take a big breath before speaking, so that their breathing seems uneven

Body Movements

Using body movements to help get a word out - stamps their foot or moves their head or losing eye contact when stuck on a word

Hiding

A child tries to hide their stammer: pretend they've forgotten what they want to say, change a word they have started to say or go unusually quiet.

The above features will probably vary in their frequency according to the speaking situation.

Stammering is primarily a neurological, not psychological, condition. It is often hereditary – about 60% of people who stammer have another family member who stammers.

What is clear is that parents do not cause stammering. The way you respond to your child's stammer can make a real difference.

DEVELOPMENTAL NON-FLUENCY

Learning to talk, like learning to walk, is never a completely smooth and trouble-free process. Many children stumble over words as they learn to construct sentences. A natural period of non-fluency often occurs between the ages of 2 – 7 years.

During this period, children may repeat words or phrases and use some interjections (um's, eh's) as they sort out what it is they're trying to say. Children usually work through this without any help.

It may be difficult to tell the difference between developmental non-fluency and early stammering. If you are at all concerned about a child's speech you should arrange to talk to your Speech and Language Therapist.

THE SPECIALIST STAMMERING SERVICE, SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY
THE SALT WAY CENTRE, PEARL ROAD, SWINDON, SN5 5TD
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WHAT HELPS...

YOUNG CHILDREN WHO ARE STAMMERING ARE DOING THEIR BEST WHILST SPEAKING, THERE SHOULD BE NO EXPECTATION FOR THEM TO MAKE CHANGES. IT IS UP TO US AS ADULTS TO CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT FOR A CHILD TO BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE.

Reduce time pressure

Pause for one second before responding to the child. This will slow things down and give them time for thought

Talk more slowly

You will be showing the child how to speak slowly, and they will gradually learn this by copying you.

Create a calm environment

Use visual timetables, reduce background noise, create safe/ quiet spaces for a child to retreat to. Try calming activities e.g. reading, craft or singing.

Adapt your interaction skills

Use shorter, simpler sentences.
Avoid asking too many questions. Keep language simple.

Talk about things the child wants to talk about.
Listen to what the child says rather than how he/ she says it.

Try to look at and listen to the child when they need to speak to you.
Maintain 'normal' and relaxed eye-contact.

Encourage the idea of taking turns
Be clear about taking turns to talk and manage turn-taking whilst speaking. This means the child will know they will be able to have their say.

Offer praise

Praise the child for the things they do well.
Developing a child's confidence is very important. Ensure speaking opportunities are created and are successful.

Offer Reassurance

If a child is struggling and/ or becomes distressed,, reassure them that you have noticed the bumpy talking, it's ok and you are listening. You can also offer to say the word together with them. Perhaps offer an activity that doesn't involve lots of speech



Dealing with difficult questions

Comments from other children

Children in the setting may ask questions e.g. "Why does Ben talk like that?". Respond honestly and carefully, e.g. "Ben sometimes gets his words stuck. He knows what he wants to say so we can help him by giving him a little bit more time."

Is the child putting it on?

The answer is probably not. Stammering is hard work and not something someone puts on.

Is the child copying someone who stammers?

Children do copy each other, but it is unlikely that they would do this for any length of time. Stammering is not "catching". If more than one person in a family stammers it is probably due to genetic factors.

Did someone cause the child to stammer?

Research has shown that people cannot cause a child to stammer. However, the way people react to the child who stammers can make a difference to their talking.

MANAGING DEMANDS...

A useful way to think about stammering is to imagine an old fashioned set of scales. These scales represent a child's talking. On one side we have the child's ability to talk. On the other side are demands on the child. These demands may be placed on the child by the people they talk to, the environment they are communicating in or by the child themselves.



Consider how you can reduce demands in your setting. See the What Helps section.

Watch this [video](#) which explains managing demands and abilities further

REMEMBER

If you are at all concerned about a child stammering please fill in a [referral form](#) with parent's consent. You do not need to complete BRISC or demonstrate a graduated response for this.

Access our [information leaflet](#) for parents here

Access our [advice leaflets](#) on how adults can adapt their interaction to support communication

Access our online, free of charge, [Stammering Awareness session](#)

Share your observations of the child in your setting with the Speech and Language Therapist who can offer advice about how to support them.

Common Demands

Time pressure

There may be a sense of "hurriedness". The child feels he has little time and tries to speak quickly.

Rate of others

The child has to work harder to process the information and think of how to respond.

Turn taking

The child rushes in all the time or can't have their say.

Level of language

The language levels of adults or the child himself can impact on fluency. Using language that is too complicated means the child has to work harder to understand and think of how to respond.

Re-actions to stammering

The way people react to stammering affect it.

OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES

[Swindon Speech and Language Therapy Website](#)



- [STAMMA](#)- Great information and access to online groups and helpline

- [How to talk so kids will listen: Series](#)

We'd like to know when things go well, suggestions or concerns
Please discuss these with your Speech & Language Therapist
or contact us

You can also fill in our [electronic survey here](#)

