



## STUTTERING INFORMATION GUIDE

Stuttering or "speech disfluency" is a speech/language impairment characterized by disruptions in the flow of speech such as:

- repetition of whole words (i.e., I-I go)
- repetition of parts of words ( i.e., buh-boy)
- prolongations of sounds (i.e., [aaa] apple)
- complete blockages of sound (i.e., [a---] act)
- Speech disfluencies may also be accompanied by physical tension or struggle.

Everyone is disfluent at times and may sometimes exhibit repetitions or prolongations. However, the disfluencies of people who do not stutter are not as frequent as those who do. The kinds of disfluencies are also generally different. "Typical disfluencies" consist of the repetition of whole words and the interjection of syllables such as *um*, and *but*. However, "non -typical" or stutter-like disfluencies include prolongation of sounds and syllables and repetition of sounds and syllables.

Almost all children go through a stage of frequent disfluency in early speech development, usually between the ages of 2 and 5. Speech is produced easily in spite of the disfluencies. As children mature and sharpen their communication skills, these disfluencies typically disappear but not always. Stuttering usually starts during this same time period but may occasionally appear for the first time in a school-aged child and more rarely in an adult. As a parent, seek the advice of a speech language pathologist if:

- you or your child are concerned about his/her speech
- disfluencies begin to occur more often
- disfluencies begin to sound effortful or strained

There is no single cause of stuttering. Current research indicates that different factors, including genetic inheritance, the child's language skills, the child's ability to move his or her mouth while speaking, the child's temperament, and the reactions of those in the child's environment play a role in the development of stuttering.

The goals of treatment are improved fluency and success in communication. There are a variety of successful approaches for accomplishing these goals. There are also several strategies parents can employ at home with their child which will help to promote fluency.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Model a slow rate of speech and appropriate loudness (think Mr. Rogers). He used a slow rate of speech with lots of pauses and good inflection.
- Add pauses frequently during longer utterances to allow time to process the information.
- Be a relaxed and attentive listener. Wait until your child has finished his/her thought before responding.
- Reduce time pressure constraints by increasing the duration of turn switching pauses while conversing with your child. Wait one-two seconds before answering your child's questions. This will teach your child not to rush into responding during his own speaking turns and to take enough time before speaking to formulate his answers more fully.
- Instead of giving advice, model the correct way of speaking (i.e., child says, "Let's Let's Let's have pizza for dinner." Parents respond, "Yes, let's have pizza for dinner," in a very slow and relaxed voice).
- Avoid asking your child to "perform" in front of family members or friends via reciting rhymes or stories. "Performance speech" places great demands on a child's fluency. Although it is important to show pride in your child's accomplishments especially those related to speech, it is more helpful for your child to demonstrate his skills in ways less demanding on fluency (i.e., speaking together or singing).
- Limit the use of open-ended questions which require long or complex answers (i.e., "What did you do at school today?"). Children are more likely to stutter when they use long, grammatically complex sentences. Therefore, when a child is disfluent, use closed-ended questions which require shorter, simpler answers (i.e., "Who/what did you play with at school today?").

**Resources:**

National Stuttering Association

<http://www.nsastutter.org/>

Stuttering Home Page Chat Room

<http://www.mankato.mssus.edu/dept/comdis/kuster/chat/chatroom.html>

Stuttering Foundation of America

<http://www.stutteringhelp.org>

Stuttering Home Page

<http://www.stutteringhomepage.com>

International Stuttering Association

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~edorlow/is.html>

American Speech Language Hearing Association

[www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

Stuttering Center of Western Pennsylvania

[www.stutteringcenter.org](http://www.stutteringcenter.org)