

## Stammering

Stammering can also be called stuttering, or dysfluency. If the stammer does not resolve within two weeks please contact ICS for advice.

When a child stammers s/he may;

- Repeat sounds, words or phrases
- Make speech sounds longer
- Show signs of struggling to get the words out such as blocks or gaps
- Blink their eyes, clench their fist, or show other signs of tension
- Avoid using certain words
- Avoid some situations, e.g. reading aloud, using the telephone
- Sound as if they are out of breath
- Be anxious or withdrawn in some situations



### Younger children that stammer

Many children between the ages of two and five go through a period of non-fluency. They are coping with lots of life changes and learning experiences and do not yet have all the language skills they need.

### Everyday strategies

- Reduce your pace. Speak with your child in a calm, unhurried way, making sure you pause frequently. Try and wait for a few seconds after your child finishes before you begin to speak. This will be more effective than giving advice to your child such as "slow down"
- Try to resist asking questions one after the other as the children may feel under pressure to respond to these. It is more helpful to comment on what the child has said and wait for a response
- Try to increase the times that you give your child your undivided attention and are really listening. Give positive eye contact and acknowledge what they are saying and not how it is being said.
- Try and encourage all members of the family to take turns and listen to others. Children find it easier to talk when they don't feel rushed and there are fewer interruptions
- Praise your child and build their confidence, praise them when they talk smoothly and also praise strengths across all aspects of their life such as; increasing independence and being caring
- Try and set aside a few minutes each day at a regular time when you can give your child your attention (switching off the TV, phones and iPad's). This quiet time can build confidence and can be around 5-10 minutes long
- Apply any rules in the house consistently for each child whether they stammer or not.
- Stammering can increase when your child is tired, excited or anxious. Try and keep all routines consistent as they are likely to benefit from a relaxed atmosphere around them
- Children who stammer often stammer more on long, difficult sentences. Be a good model and keep your sentences uncomplicated

### Older children that stammer

Stammering or stuttering is an involuntary repetition, prolongation or block which interrupts the normal flow of speech. A stammer usually gets worse when the child perceives himself to be under pressure.

### Everyday strategies

- Show that you are interested in what the child says; talk about things they are interested in.
- Try to maintain natural eye contact
- Do not finish his/her sentences and try to reduce the number of times they are interrupted whilst talking; explain the importance of turn taking within a conversation
- Slow down your own rate of speech (signing can help with this) and encourage them to slow their rate of speech; they may need support to plan their responses before speaking.
- Reduce the number of questions you ask
- Always give plenty of time to answer one question at a time
- Try to avoid a chaotic or stressful environments (ensure they get enough sleep).
- Try to arrange some time during the day when the child can have your full attention in a calm and relaxed atmosphere for perhaps five minutes
- Praise your child for the things they do well
- Treat the child who stammers in exactly the same way as a child who does not stammer—discipline should be appropriate and consistent
- Celebration of success or competence in other areas can be encouraging, as well as directing the focus away from stammering