

# Supporting older children and young people that stammer

Children's Speech and Language Therapy  
Acute and Community AHPs

## Introduction

This leaflet is produced for parents/carers who may have concerns about their child stammering.

## What is stammering?

- Stammering is also known as stuttering or dysfluency, but they all mean the same thing.
- Typically, children will start to stammer between the ages of 2 and 4, when their language skills are developing very quickly. It is estimated that up to 5% of all children will stammer at some point with approximately 1% persisting stammering into adulthood. For some children/young people they may have stammered for only a brief period when they were younger and then not stammered again for a number of years.
- Boys are approximately 4-5 times more likely than girls to continue stammering.
- Stammering can run in families.
- Everybody's stammer is different:
  - Some children may repeat parts of words or whole words.
  - Some may stretch out the words they are saying
- They may block on a word, where no sound comes out at all. Some children may avoid certain speaking situations or specific words that they believe they may stammer on. They may also present with tension or other associated behaviours, such as eye blinking or tapping when they stammer.
- You may notice your child's stammer has changed over time or that they may have times where their talking is more fluent. You may also notice that they stammer more when they are tired, feeling excited or nervous or when asked lots of questions.
- Stammering is not linked with intellectual ability.
- How a child or young person thinks and feels about their stammer can impact on their fluency.
- Whilst intervention may focus on the use of techniques to support control of an individual's stammer, work may also be carried out to support them with their thoughts and feelings to help them to be more confident and less anxious/worried about their talking.

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

## How can I help?

Parents do not cause stammering and there are lots of things that you can do to support your child's talking:

- **Time** – Give your child time to talk. This shows them that you are interested in what they are saying rather than how they are saying it. Lots of parents will also try to help their child by encouraging them to 'take a breath' or 'start again'. However, this can interrupt the flow of conversation and may increase your child's awareness of their stammer. It can also be frustrating for them. Being patient and allowing them the time to talk may therefore be more beneficial.
- **Slow down your talking** – sometimes children can talk very quickly and this can interrupt their flow of speech. However, telling a child to 'slow down' often isn't helpful. Instead, try slowing down your own rate of speech or use more pauses when talking to your child. This will model a slower, less rushed way of talking and makes it more likely that your child will start to do this too.
- **Reduce questions** – try to reduce the number of questions that you ask. Asking lots of questions can put more pressure on speaking. For example, when completing an activity or talking with your child, you could try asking just one question for every three-four comments that you make. Remember to allow plenty of time for your child to respond once you have asked a question.
- **Praise** – praise your child for the things they do well. This will help to continue building their self-esteem and confidence. This is particularly important if your child is aware of their stammer.
- **Routines** – try to have a consistent routine for your child as research shows things such as tiredness can affect fluency.
- **Turn-taking** – if there are other siblings at home then the child who stammers may sometimes feel that they have to compete to tell you something. Encourage everyone to take turns with talking to help support a less-rushed way of speaking.
- **Acknowledge and reassure** – if your child is aware of their stammer or becoming frustrated by it then acknowledge it with reassurance. This lets them know that you're not bothered by it and that they can talk to you about it.
- **Techniques** – your child may be introduced to some techniques to support control of their stammering. However, although you will be trying to help do not remind your child to use these. Making changes to the way an individual speaks is extremely difficult and can take a long time. It may also give the impression that they should not stammer or there is something wrong with the way they speak.
- **Use neutral language** – it is easy to unintentionally talk about stammering in a negative way. For example, you may ask your child if they have had a 'bad day' with their talking or comment that their talking has been 'really good today'. Instead, try using words such as 'more' or 'less' to avoid your child thinking that stammering is bad or something that needs to be 'fixed'.

Remember, you know your child best and will likely be doing some of the things above already. If there are things on the list that you do already, see if you can do more of them.

## Remember...

- Your child is not stammering on purpose and may not even be aware that they are doing it.
- Things that help one person who stammers, may be different to another person. Everyone's stammer and experience of stammering is different.
- Tell everyone that sees your child how to help. Give them a copy of this leaflet to read.

## Further information

Further information o support your child can also be found in these leaflets available at <https://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk/services/service-directory-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy-children/>:

- Attention and Listening
- Receptive Language
- Expressive Language
- Speech Sounds
- Social Communication

All are available on the website.

## How do I get in touch?

Speech and Language Therapy Service

The Gem Centre

Neachells Lane

Wednesfield

Wolverhampton

WV11 3PG

Telephone: 01902 444363

E-mail: [rwh-tr.Speech-And-Language@nhs.net](mailto:rwh-tr.Speech-And-Language@nhs.net)

Website:

<https://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk/services/service-directory-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy/>



## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。