

Many children will stop stammering naturally or with the help of speech therapy. Some will continue to stammer as they get older. It's difficult to predict what will happen next. Stammering may come and go, disappearing for weeks or months before reappearing.

Stammering is very individual and each child will have their own behaviours. Examples of stammering include:

- Repetition of single sounds or whole words, e.g. "g-g-go away!" or "When, when, when is playtime?"
- Stretching sounds in a word, e.g. 'I like that ssstory.'
- Blocking of sounds, when the child's mouth appears ready to speak but no sound comes out for several seconds, e.g. "—I got a book."
- Stopping speaking half-way through a sentence.
- Signs of facial tension, eg around the mouth.

As your child gets older they may become more self-conscious about their stammer and develop 'tricks' for getting words out. This could include pushing sounds out with extra force, foot-tapping, eye-blinking or moving their head.

Children who stammer might start to feel embarrassed and worried about their stammer and try and hide it. They might start to speak less or change a word they want to say to one that's easier to voice.

How you respond to your child will affect how they feel. So, if you're feeling anxious and upset about their stammer, they might start to feel that way as well.

It's hard not to worry but if you can, be positive about your child's stammering. There are lots of successful people out there, whose stammering hasn't held them back.

Try to talk with your child about their speech whenever they want to. Openness and a relaxed attitude will give the clear message that they are so much more than their stammer.

HERE TO HELP

Visit our Facebook Group - Space for Stammering, moderated by STAMMA.

This group provides a space for people to share experiences, ask for advice and talk openly about stammering. It's a closed group, so anything you post there will only be seen by other group members. Parents often find it helpful to connect with adults who stammer.

Contact us on our helpline or webchat to talk through any concerns you have about your child and stammering. We're here to listen and provide support.

We can help you find details of your local NHS service and talk through how best to support your child. If your child is aged 14 or older, they can call us to practise speech techniques, have a chat and gain confidence in using the phone.

WEBCHAT
stamma.org/help

HELPLINE
0808 802 0002

Weekdays 10am-noon; 6pm-8pm
Free. Confidential. Anonymous.

Continue to get the help, information and support you need. Meet others and keep up to date by joining us, it's free.
stamma.org/join

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The British Stammering Association
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STAMMA.ORG

Reg. charity nos: 1089967/SC038866



Stammering, also known as stuttering, is not uncommon in children. About one in every 12 children will stammer.

A stammer needn't be a barrier for **school-aged children.**

STAMMA



Stammering, also known as stuttering, is common in children.

About 8% of children stammer. It often starts between the ages of two and five, but not always.

CAUSES

You haven't done something wrong. It is not your fault that your child stammers.

The causes and triggers of stammering are complex, but we know that it has a physical basis.

Research shows us that there are subtle differences in the brains of people who stammer. Around 60% of people who stammer have a relative who stammers or used to stammer.

HOW TO HELP

Share these with people in your child's life such as their teacher and grandparents:

1. Praise your child for what they say, not how they say it.
2. Give them time to say what they want. Don't finish their words or sentences for them and model this to their siblings
3. Be patient and listen. Rather than telling your child to slow down, slow down your own speech to reduce any time pressure they may feel.
4. Even if you feel anxious when your child is stammering, try not to show it. Keep natural eye contact and remain calm.
5. Describing stammering using neutral language. For example, "he's stammered more this week" rather than "his speech has been bad".

For more resources on how you can support your child, visit our website at www.stamma.org.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Speech and language therapy for children who stammer is available free on the NHS. You may be able to make a referral yourself. Otherwise, go through your GP, health visitor or school staff. Find details of your local NHS service online by searching 'children speech and language therapy' and your location. Contact us if you need support to find them.

If you can afford it, private therapy is also an option. Visit www.asltip.com to find a private therapist. Find out if they have experience working with children who stammer before booking an appointment.

BULLYING

Teasing and bullying for stammering is not acceptable. If your child reports this happening at school, make sure school is aware and is addressing the issue.

Being able to talk openly about stammering can be the best defence against teasing or bullying. If the child's reaction is 'it's just a stammer, so what?' bullies have less to work with.

THERAPY

In the first appointment, the speech and language therapist will want to learn as much as they can about your child. They'll ask about your child's speech and language, their health and development, as well as their interests and personality.

The therapist will also observe your child's speech and communication skills. There will be time for you to discuss concerns you have and how you can help. They may recommend that your child's needs are reviewed in a few months' time or offer some therapy. There may be a wait between the first appointment and therapy. The type of therapy will depend on a number of factors and could be individual, family-based or in a group with children of a similar age.

Therapy is likely to include developing a good understanding of stammering, developing communication skills and confidence, managing thoughts and feelings around stammering, and help talking feel easier. You have an important role in your child's development, as you influence the environments around them.

GROUP THERAPY

Below are some UK courses for young people. Some may need local Clinical Commissioning Group funding.

City University, London

Five-day courses for those aged 8-18 during school holidays in London. Tel: 020 7040 0150.

The Fluency Trust

Residential courses in Devon for ages 10-17. Courses combine intensive speech therapy with outdoor pursuits. Tel: 01793 466790.

The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering

London based weekly group therapy for ages 8-12 during school holidays in London. Tel: 020 3316 8100. Visit michaelpalincentreforstammering.org

The Talking Out Residential

5-day residential courses for ages 12-16. Combining speech therapy with outdoor activities. admin@talkingoutresidential.com. Tel: 07763719272.