Stammering/stuttering

What is stammering?

Stammering is when a child/adult repeats sounds or syllables, sounds are made longer than they should be or a word gets stuck or doesn’t come out at all.

Stammering varies in severity from person to person, and from situation to situation. Someone might have periods of stammering followed by times when they speak relatively fluently.

Types of stammering

Development stammering - occurs in early childhood when speech and language skills develop rapidly. This is the most common kind of stammering.

Acquired or late-onset stammering - occurs in older children and adults as a result of a head injury, stroke or a progressive neurological condition; it can also be caused by certain drugs or medication, or emotional trauma.

(NHS, 2016)

How stuttering affects children

Stuttering can have many effects on both parents and the child. Some signs and symptoms of stuttering are:

* Difficulty starting a word, phrase or sentence
* Prolonging a word or sound
* Excess tension, tightness, or movement of face or upper body to produce a word
* Anxiety about talking
* Limited ability to effectively communicate

The speech difficulties of stuttering may be accompanied by:

* Rapid eye blinks
* Tremors of the lips or jaw
* Facial tics
* Head jerks
* Clenching fists

(Mayo Clinic, 2017)

How to support children who stutter

* Give them plenty of time to answer/speak or read
* Encourage thinking time before the child speaks
* Model a relaxed, slow style of speaking and establish a calm environment
* Ensure children take it in turns and are not rewarded for calling out
* it may be easier for the pupil who stammers to indicate when they are ready to speak. They may want to volunteer or they may prefer you to pick them
* Be aware that pupils who stammer sometimes hide their difficulty by not contributing, pretending they do not know, asking to be excused or playing the clown.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stammering/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stuttering/symptoms-causes/syc-20353572>

<https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/Stammering-SUGGESTIONS-SHEETS1.pdf>