

Children and Stuttering

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

What Is Stuttering?

According to the Stuttering Foundation, stuttering occurs when the flow of speech is broken by repetitions (li-li-like this), prolongations (lllllike this), or abnormal stoppages (no sound) of sounds and syllables. Unusual facial and body movements may also be associated with the effort to speak.

What Causes Stuttering?

While the exact causes of stuttering are unknown, we do understand that both genetic and developmental factors influence the onset, development, continuation, or recovery from stuttering. During development, speech, language, motor, cognitive, temperament, and environmental influences, both inherited and experienced, all interact in a complex manner. As a result, about 5% of children go through a period of stuttering, and 80% will recover without long-term intervention. The other 20% (or 1% of the population) are more likely to be boys, have family histories of chronic stuttering, have experienced stuttering for more than 12 to 14 months, and have linguistic, physiological, psychological, and/or other developmental or environmental influences that interact, impacting their fluency development in a way that perpetuates stuttering.

What Can I Do to Help My Child's Speech?

What to do when you listen to your child

- Pay more attention to what your child is saying (the content or message) than to how he or she is saying it (whether it's stuttered).
- Pause briefly before responding to your child's questions, statements, and comments.
- Try not to finish your child's thoughts and sentences. Allow your child to complete his or her own thoughts and sentences.
- Try to maintain reasonably relaxed body language when talking with your child, especially when he or she seems to be having trouble talking.

What to do when you talk to your child

- Make talking fun! Let your child talk about things that interest him/her.



- Speak at a normal to slow-normal rate, particularly when your child is having trouble talking.
- When your child is less fluent, reduce the number and complexity of your questions. For example, ask your child, "Did you play inside or outside today?" rather than, "Tell me everything you did at recess today."
- Let your child know you like his or her attempts to talk by saying such things as "I really like the things you tell me," together with positive, encouraging nonverbal responses (for example, smiling).

How Do I Respond to My Child's Stuttering?

- When asked, talk openly about stuttering in a matter-of-fact way and at a level appropriate to your child.
- Try to minimize verbally and/or nonverbally reacting to your child's stuttering. For example, avoid telling him or her to "relax," "say it again," "take a deep breath," "slow down," think about what you are saying."
- When your child shows frustration with stuttering (for example, refusing to talk, covering his or her mouth, or saying "Why can't I talk?"), respond as you would to a skinned knee, that is, in a matter-of-fact way by acknowledging the situation, comforting your child, and moving on.

Please see reverse.



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Helpful Tips For You and Your Family

- Establish and be consistent with the child and family's daily routines.
- Minimize undue lifestyle time pressure. For example, try to avoid doing several things at once. Instead, try to establish a reasonably relaxed atmosphere in your everyday life.
- When possible, give your child advanced notice about upcoming changes in family routines, schedules, or events (for example, moving, new baby, change in school or daycare, family vacation, new caregiver).
- Help all family members learn to take their turns talking and listening to one another.
- Educate yourselves about stuttering.

Who We Are and Who We Serve

The **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC)** works with and for people with disabilities and their family members, educators and service providers, researchers, students, and policy makers. Faculty and staff engage in interdisciplinary research, training, service, and information dissemination and work in collaboration with local, state and national networks and partners. (615) 322-8240, toll-free (866) 936-8852, vkc.vumc.org

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Provides free information, referral sources, and help with navigating services via phone, email, and website. Assistance is available to individuals of all ages, all types of disabilities, and all languages spoken. Its website includes a directory of more than 3,000 agencies searchable by Tennessee county, topic of interest, and other filters. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC and is partially funded by Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and other state agencies. (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636, TNPathfinder.org

Two Ways to Take Part in Research

StudyFinder is a searchable database that lists current VKC studies. Studies seek people of all ages with and without developmental disabilities. See vkc.vumc.org/studyfinder. Research Match is a secure place for volunteers and researchers to connect. See researchmatch.org

Other Resources

- **Developmental Stuttering Project**
childstuttering.vkcsites.org
- **Stuttering Treatment Program at Vanderbilt**
vanderbilthealth.com/program/stuttering-treatment-program-vanderbilt
- **The Stuttering Foundation**
stutteringhelp.org
- **National Stuttering Association**
westutter.org
- **National Association of Young People Who Stutter**
friendswhostutter.org
- **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association**
asha.org

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