

Stammering – the pre-school child

Learning to talk is never completely smooth, and it does not happen straight away. Stumbling over sounds and words is a natural part of the process of learning to talk.



- It is not known exactly why a child stammers; it is likely that a combination of factors is involved.
- Parents do not cause stammering
- 4 out of 5 young children who stammer will recover

Some ways to help your child become more fluent:

At least 3 times per week spend 5-10 minutes just you and your child. This ‘special time’ shows your child that they have your full attention and there is no need to rush. Turn off the TV, radio and phone and move into a room where you will not be disturbed. During special times, you can try one or two of these other ideas:

- ✓ Choose a calm, quiet activity for special time to reduce excitement levels. A puzzle or lotto game is a good idea.
- ✓ If a child gives themselves time to think and plan what to say then they are less likely to stammer. You can help by setting the pace for your child by slowing down *your own* speech. Try to use a slower rate and introduce more pauses before you speak. This is more effective than telling a child to slow down or take a breath.
- ✓ Show you are interested in what your child says, and not *how* it is said. Relax, look at your child and let them lead the play.
- ✓ Be careful when asking questions. Avoid complicated questions and give your child plenty of time to think and reply (you can try counting to 10 in your head).
- ✓ Be careful not to interrupt your child. It can be harder for a stammering child if they are rushing what they want to say.

Do not expect changes in your child’s speech straight away, but continuing to practise these ideas can help your child to talk more easily.