



Stuttering

What is normal dysfluency (not stuttering)?

Many children between the ages of two and five repeat words and parts of sentences when they are speaking. This is natural and is called normal dysfluency. It is normal for children to:

- repeat one word or a few words once or twice: "My – my ball went under the table."
- change a sentence: "It went ... my ball went under the table."
- fill a pause with "um" "ah" "uh": "I want some – um – ice cream."
- pause or hesitate but not fill it in: "Daddy, – – – throw my ball!"
- sometimes repeat a single word part: "Mom – mommy catch."

When to be concerned about stuttering

A small number of children will have a problem with stuttering. These children:

- often repeat sounds and parts of words: "Ca – ca – can I have I–I–I–ice cream?"
- often repeat one word more than once or twice: "I I I I want to go"
- get stuck on sounds and may show tension or struggle: "Daddy, throw ... my ball."
- hold a sound: "I waaaant to play with hhhhim."
- may show other body movements when speaking, such as blinking their eyes, stamping their feet, moving their head or taking deep breaths.

What you can do if your child is stuttering

- **Speak with your child in an unhurried way, pausing often.** Wait a few seconds after your child finishes talking before you begin to speak. Use a slow relaxed style of speaking.
- **Don't ask your child to slow down, start again or take a deep breath.** Instead, model slow relaxed talking.
- **Use more comments.** Instead of asking questions (i.e. "What colour is the car?"), make a comment (i.e. "I see a blue car").
- **Show that you are listening** (get down to your child's level, look at your child, lean in). Pay attention and respond to what your child is saying, not how it was said.
- **Play with your child, giving your complete attention.** Try to do this for a few minutes each day. This quiet, calm time can be a confidence-builder for young children.
- **Help everyone in your family learn to take turns talking and listening.** Children find it much easier to talk when there are few interruptions.
- **It's okay to talk about stuttering with your child.** You can acknowledge that talking can be difficult and, at times, we all have bumpy speech.



When to refer to a Speech-Language Pathologist.

- If you are at all concerned.
- If your child is stuttering (see when to be concerned).
- When your child knows they are having trouble speaking. For example: doesn't want to speak, covers mouth or is frustrated when speaking.

If any of the above describes your feelings/situation, contact a speech-language pathologist. Your speech-language pathologist will help you determine the best plan for your child.

**Other fact sheets on parenting your child are
available at your local Community Health Office/Centre
or online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>**

For more information, contact a Speech-Language Pathologist
or Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health
www.vch.ca

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