

Stammering: How Can You Help?

Show your child that you are interested in what he says, not how he says it

Try to maintain natural eye contact when he is having difficulty talking. Don't finish his sentences – this can be frustrating for him.

Listen carefully to your child

Children often stammer more when they are excited or competing to speak. It might be helpful to say 'It sounds as if you've got something interesting to tell me, let's sit down so you can tell me all about it.'

Take turns to talk so that everyone in the family can speak without being interrupted

This will reduce the amount that your child is interrupted, or that he interrupts others.

Try to speak slowly and calmly yourself

However DON'T ask your child to slow down, stop and start again, or take a big breath. This is not helpful.

If your child gets upset about her speech, it's OK to talk about it

You might say something like: 'Don't worry, talking can be tricky sometimes when you're still learning' or 'It's hard to say that, lots of children get stuck sometimes.'

Stammering affects about one child in 20 between the age of 2 and 5 years. While the underlying causes are not fully understood, we know that parents do NOT cause stammering – also called stuttering. Evidence shows that most children outgrow this phase, although at the time this can be hard to believe. Treatment before the age of 6 years can make a difference. Please contact your speech and language therapist if you have any questions or concerns.

