# Let's Talk About ...

### **Stuttering or fluency problems**

Stuttering is a speech disorder where a child has trouble with the smooth flow of speech. Children who stutter know what they want to say but have trouble saying it.

### What does stuttering sound like?

Stuttering may sound like this:

- Repeating part of or whole words ('M...m...Mom' or 'Can...can I go?')
- Repeated phrases ('Can I go...can I go...can I go to the store?')
- Stretched out sounds ('Ssssssister' or 'whaaaat')
- Blocks (moments where no sounds come out when your child is trying to speak)

#### What causes stuttering?

No one knows exactly what causes stuttering, but it may be related to the brain activity that produces speech.

• Stuttering can run in families. If a parent or relative stutters, your child has a higher chance of stuttering.

- Anxiety or stress can make stuttering worse.
- Stuttering is not caused by low intelligence, emotional problems, parenting style or personality type.

# What do I need to know about stuttering?

- Most children begin stuttering between 2–5 years old, when they start putting words together into short sentences.
- Stuttering may start suddenly or gradually. It may become more severe later if it isn't treated.
- Boys are 2 times more likely to stutter than girls. Stuttering can be more severe over time and even throughout the day.
- Getting early treatment for your child's stuttering is best. Some children grow out of stuttering without treatment, but it's impossible to know if that will happen for your child.
- Your child may stutter more when they are excited, tired, nervous, arguing, competing to be heard, using complicated words, or have limited time to speak.



• Some children who stutter may avoid speaking in some situations (like on the phone), using certain words, or speaking with some people.

### What should I do if my child stutters?

- Have your child talk to you without distractions or competing family members. Listen to what your child says, not how they say it. Tell them it is okay to stutter.
- Let your child finish what they are saying. Don't finish words or sentences for them.
- Repeat or rephrase what your child says to show you understood.
- Reassure your child if they are aware of the stutter and are worry about it.
- Interact normally with your child. Don't interrupt them to help fix or treat the stutter. Saying 'Take a breath' or Slow down' does not help. It can make your child feel more self-conscious.

### What should I avoid if my child stutters?

• Don't draw attention to your child's speech in front of others.

- Don't put your child in situations where they have to speak alone to someone they don't know.
- Don't interrupt your child's speech or complete sentences for them.
- Don't criticize your child's speech.
- Don't tease or let others tease your child about their stutter.
- Don't let other people make comments or try to correct your child's speech.

## When do I need to get help for my child's stutter?

Contact a speech language pathologist when:

- Your child becomes self-conscious about or afraid of talking.
- Your child has stuttered for more than 6 months.
- Your child is 5 years old or older.
- Your child also blinks their eyes a lot and grimaces while stuttering.
- Your child avoids words or speaking situations.

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