



# A Parent's Guide to Stuttering *for teenagers 12 to 18 years*

## What is stuttering?

Stuttering is a motor speech problem that is not a normal part of a child's development. This means that stuttering is **NOT** caused by:

- bad parenting
- anxiety
- low intelligence or IQ

The exact cause of stuttering is unknown. There is a genetic link in some cases.

The ratio of boys to girls is 3:1 and this disproportion increases with age.

Most school aged children (up to 82%) are teased about their stuttering.

## Stuttering behaviours include:

- Repetition - of sounds (c-c-c-cat), syllables (ca-ca-ca-cat), words (cat-cat-cat-cat) or phrases (the cat, the cat, the cat jumped).
- Prolongation - of sounds (e.g. m→y).
- Inappropriate pauses - between sounds or words.
- Blocking - getting stuck on sounds and nothing comes out.

Body and facial movements may accompany these stuttering behaviours.

## How can parents help?

- Most importantly, contact a Speech Pathologist.
- Talk about stuttering openly.
- Encourage your teenager to seek treatment but ensure that it is their decision.
- Listen to what your teenager is saying rather than how it is said. This should help them feel comfortable to talk.
- Be consistent when using speaking rules, e.g. everyone in the family is to try not to interrupt when someone is talking.
- Try not to fill in words or finish off your teenager's sentences- this can be frustrating and sometimes you will guess wrong!
- Try to avoid giving advice such as 'take a deep breath'. Although you mean well, this suggestion rarely helps.

Stuttering can be treated. Smooth Speech programs have the best evidence for treatment outcomes for stuttering in teenagers and adults.

See a Speech Pathologist for information and advice.