



A Parent's Guide to Stuttering *for children under 12 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.
- Acknowledge that your child is stuttering and reassure your child that he or she is doing nothing wrong.
- Listen to what your child is saying rather than how it is said. This shows your child that you enjoy talking to them and are interested in what they are saying.
- Be consistent when using speaking rules, e.g. everyone in the family is to try not to interrupt when someone is talking.
- Reduce the pressure on your child when he or she is speaking - don't put them on the spot.

The Lidcombe Program has the best evidence for treatment outcomes for stuttering in children under 12 years, with the best age for treatment being 4-5 years of age.

Stuttering can be treated at other stages of the life-span but often with longer treatment times and more complex treatments than for preschool children.

See a Speech Pathologist for information and advice.