**Stuttering (Fluency) Disorders**

Talking to people can be hard if you stutter. You may get stuck on certain words or sounds. You may feel tense or uncomfortable. You might change words to avoid stuttering.

We all have times when we do not speak smoothly. We may add "uh" or "you know" to what we say. Or, we may say a sound or word more than once. These disfluencies are normal if they happen every once in a while. When it happens a lot, it may be stuttering.

People who stutter may have the following types of disfluencies:

· **Blocks.** This happens when you have a hard time getting a word out. You may pause for a long time or not be able to make a sound. For example, "I want a ...... cookie."

· **Prolongations.** You may stretch a sound out for a long time, like c**oooooooooooo**kie.

· **Repetitions.** You may repeat parts of words, like **co-co-co-**cookie.

Stuttering can change from day to day. You may have times when you are fluent and times when you stutter more. Stress or excitement can lead to more stuttering.

Stuttering is more than just the blocks or repetitions in your speech. It can also make you tense your body or struggle to talk. Stuttering may get in the way of how you talk to others. You may want to hide your stuttering. So, you may avoid certain words or refuse to talk in some situations. For example, you may not want to talk on the phone if that makes you stutter more.

**Signs of stuttering**

The following types of disfluencies happen when you stutter:

· Part-word repetitions – "I **w-w-w-**want a drink."

· One-syllable word repetitions – "**Go-go-go** away."

· Prolonged sounds – "**Ssssssss**am is nice."

· Blocks or stops – **(pause)** "Come here."

You may tense up your face or body when you have a block or stop.

These types of disfluencies happen to many people and are not stuttering:

· Adding a sound or word, called an interjection – "I ***um*** need to go home."

· Repeating words with more than one syllable – "Here is my **puppy-puppy-puppy."**

· Repeating phrases – "***He is-he is*** four years old."

· Changing the words in a sentence, called revision – "**I had-I lost** my tooth."

· Not finishing a thought – "**His name is** ... I can't remember."

**Causes of stuttering**

Stuttering usually starts between 2 and 6 years old. Many children go through normal periods of disfluency lasting less than 6 months. Stuttering lasting longer than this may need treatment.

There is no one cause of stuttering. Possible causes include the following:

· Family history. Many people who stutter have a family member who also stutters.

· Brain differences. People who stutter may have small differences in the way the brain works during speech.

**Risk factors**

· Gender. Boys are more likely to stutter than girls.

· Family recovery patterns. Children with family members who stopped stuttering are more likely to stop, too.

· Mood and temperament. For children who stutter, mood and temperament may lead to more stuttering. Frustration or tension can cause more disfluencies. Being excited or feeling rushed can make you stutter more. You may stutter more if other people tease you or bring attention to your speech. Your stutter may embarrass you. Or, you may feel more anxious about talking.

· Triggers. Some life events may "trigger" stuttering. For example, a young child may start to stutter when he learns a lot of new words fast. He may be able to say one or two words fluently. But, he may stutter when he uses longer sentences.

**When to seek help**

Does your child stutter? You should get help from a speech-language pathologist, or SLP, as early as possible. Early help can reduce the chances that your child will keep stuttering. You should contact an SLP if any of the following things happen:

1. **Your child's stuttering has lasted for 6–12 months or more.**
**Many children have disfluencies in their speech. However, if your child seems to stutter for more than 6 months, you should contact an SLP.**

2. **Your child starts to stutter late.**
**Stuttering may be more likely to last if your child starts stuttering after 3½ years old.**

3. **Your child starts to stutter more.**
**Listen to your child, and make note of how often he stutters. See an SLP if his stuttering stays the same or gets worse.**

4. **There is a family history of stuttering.**
**Does someone in your family also stutter? Your child may be at a higher risk for stuttering.**

5. **Your child has another speech or language disorder.**
**Does your child have problems following directions or answering questions? Does she have problems saying sounds clearly? These may be signs that stuttering will last. An SLP can help test her speech and language skills.**

6. **Your child struggles when talking.**
**Your child may have trouble dealing with stuttering. He may tense up or struggle to talk. See an SLP if your child avoids talking or tells you that it is too hard to talk.**

7. **Your child's speech worries you or your family.**
**Do you worry about your child's speech? Has another family member said something about your child's speech? An SLP can help find out if your child stutters or not.**