



DCDSB Understanding & Supporting All Learners

What is Stuttering?

Stuttering is a communication disorder that interferes with a person's ability to speak fluently. It involves the repetition, prolongation, or blocking of sounds, syllables, or words. Stuttering is not caused by psychological differences. Children do not stutter because they are more anxious, shy, or depressed than other children. Children who stutter show no differences in intelligence from children who do not stutter. There is no known cure for stuttering, including speech therapy. Instead, speech therapy helps the child learn to talk in an easier manner, and to have healthy attitudes and feelings about talking.

Developmental Stuttering vs True Stuttering

Many children will present with stuttering at one time or another when their speech and language abilities aren't developed enough to keep up with what they want to say. Most children will outgrow this developmental stuttering.

Developmental Stuttering

You may see:

- Interjections (um, uh, well, like)
- Revisions/Re-starts (i.e. starting a message and stopping to revise or re-start it)
- Repeating short phrases (e.g. I want...I want...I want...)
- Repeating whole words or syllables easily and without tension (e.g. The-the-the...; Be-be-because)
- This is common with 4 and 5 year -old's
- Your child will likely outgrow this stuttering over time

A few children will present with stuttering that is more concerning and more likely to persist into adulthood. This is called **true** stuttering. Approximately 1% of the population stutters.

True Stuttering

You may see:

- Prolongations (i.e. stretching out sounds or words) (e.g. Mmmmm...)
- Blocks (i.e. words are not coming out and the airflow is stopped) (e.g. I want the ---- ball).
- Repeating whole words, syllables or sounds **with tension and/or effortful**
- Frustration, avoidance, changing words and/or adding extra sounds to start a message
- Secondary behaviours (e.g. eye blinks, facial tics, head movements, clenching fists, etc.)
- This type of stuttering is more likely to persist into adulthood

How you can help your child who stutters

- Make your own speech slow and smooth. Rather than tell your child to slow down, reduce your rate so that you are speaking in an easy, relaxed manner.
- Decrease questions and increase comments in your speech to reduce time pressure.
- Do not interrupt. Wait and listen until your child is through with their sentence or story. Maintain eye contact and wait for them to finish, even if you must wait a long time.
- Model wait time. Take two seconds before you answer questions and insert more pauses into your own speech to help reduce speech pressure.
- If the child is unaware of the stuttering, avoid speaking about it in their presence. Do not give them the impression that you are concerned when they are speaking.
- Speech therapy can help people who stutter communicate more easily and effectively. There are no quick fixes or instant cures. Successful therapy involves a process of change over time.

Kids are more likely to stutter if...	Kids are less likely to stutter if...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think about their speech and try to control it • They feel rushed to speak • They perceive the listener as impatient or judgmental • They view speaking as a performance rather than a spontaneous act of self-expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are confident about speaking • They are comfortable with the listener • They believe their message and stuttering will be accepted • They feel in control of themselves and their environment • They are spontaneous and assertive in their interactions

Helpful Resources for better understanding & supporting students who stutter

The Stuttering Foundation (www.stutteringhelp.org)

Canadian Stuttering Association (www.stutter.ca)

The Speech and Stuttering Institute (Toronto) (www.speechandstuttering.com)

This resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter in your classroom.

