



STUTTERING

WHAT IS STUTTERING?

- Stuttering is a fluency disorder in which there are nontypical disruptions in the flow of speech.
- Disruptions can include repeated sounds (e.g., i-i-it), repeated syllables (e.g., play-play-playground), repeated words (e.g., let's-let's-let's go), drawing out of sounds (e.g., ssssnake), and blocks (i.e., the inability to begin sounds).
- These disruptions can present with secondary behaviors (e.g., eye blinking, fist clenching) and physical tension.
- Individuals who stutter often feel negatively about speaking and avoid certain situations as well as difficult words or sounds.

WHO IS AT HIGHER RISK FOR PERSISTENT STUTTERING?

- Some stuttering is developmental in nature and will resolve without intervention.
- No one true source or cause for stuttering is known.
- The following are risk factors for persistent, chronic stuttering: being male, family history of stuttering, stuttering that has persisted longer than
- 6-12 months, presence of secondary behaviors and/or physical tension, stuttering that started at 3.5 years of age or later, delayed language development or other speech impairments.

WHERE CAN AN INDIVIDUAL BE EVALUATED FOR STUTTERING?

- Children who are not yet attending school can be evaluated at their local county Intermediate Unit.
- Children who are attending school can be evaluated by their school building's speech therapist.
- Families can also seek evaluations from children's hospitals.
- Families can also seek evaluations from student therapists at local universities with speech programs.
- Families can also contact private speech therapists/clinics for evaluations.

WHY SHOULD AN INDIVIDUAL BE EVALUATED/RECEIVE THERAPY FOR STUTTERING?

- Stuttering can prevent academic and social growth as a child becomes more aware and retreats from speaking situations.
- Stuttering can prevent listeners from understanding what an individual is trying to communicate.
- Individuals who stutter often have psychological, emotional needs as a result of their fluency disorder.

HOW DO I HELP AN INDIVIDUAL WHO STUTTERS?

- Keep in mind that there is no cure for stuttering but therapy can help teach acceptance and strategies for improving the flow of speech.
- Speak openly about stuttering with the child and with those who communicate with the child.
- Model a slower rate of speaking.
- Avoid using words such as slow down/relax and avoid speaking negatively about the child's speech.
- Encourage the child to use his/her fluency strategies and to communicate often.
- Listen without interrupting and let the child finish his/her thought.
- Become knowledgeable about the fluency strategies that work for the child (i.e., stuttering modification strategies, fluency enhancing techniques). See ASHA's treatment section for more details.