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Stuttering – when to worry and what to do.

Stuttering, is where a child’s speech is interrupted by repetitions of sounds or words as they speak. The first time you hear a stutter can be very distressing. For many preschoolers, **stuttering is a normal part of learning to talk**, between ages **2–5 years**, children’s language is developing rapidly. Their ideas are racing ahead of their ability to organise and say them smoothly. This can lead to temporary “bumps” in speech.

What Is Typical (and Often Temporary)?

Many preschoolers:

- Repeat whole words: “*I want, I want the red one.*”
 - Repeat sounds once or twice: “*b-b-ball.*”
 - Seem unaware of the repetition
 - Show no tension or frustration
 - Move in and out of stuttering phases (better one week, bumpier the next)
- This type of stuttering often resolves on its own — especially when children feel relaxed and unhurried while speaking.

When Should I Be Concerned?

Consider seeking advice if you notice:

- Repeating sounds **3 or more times** (“*c-c-c-c-cat*”)
- Prolonged sounds (“*sssssun*”)
- Visible tension (tight lips, blinking, head movement)
- Your child avoiding talking or saying “I can’t say it”
- Increasing frustration or distress
- A family history of persistent stuttering
- Stuttering lasting longer than 6–12 months

If your instinct says something feels different, trust it. Early guidance can make a real difference, and make sure you discuss your concerns with the parents.

What To Do at Home (Starting Today)

You do not need to correct, fix, or practise drills. You should:

1. Slow Yourself Down

Children naturally match the pace around them. Slightly slower, relaxed speech from you models calm communication. (Do NOT ask the child to slow down).

2. Listen — Don’t Finish

Maintain eye contact. Let them finish. Avoid completing words or sentences.

3. Acknowledge Feelings (If Needed)

If the child seems aware or frustrated, you might say:

“Sometimes words feel a bit tricky. That’s okay. I’m listening.”

4. Give positive feedback about things they can do well.

- ‘ what great ideas’ / ‘I like the way you are thinking’ / ‘thank you for sharing your ideas’.

The Most Important Thing

A child’s confidence matters more than perfect fluency. Children who feel listened to, unhurried, and accepted develop strong communication foundations — whether their speech is perfectly smooth or occasionally bumpy. If you’re unsure, reach out to our team and we can give you more advice and provide the input needed.

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