

Developmental Stuttering

By: Megan Sample



Does your child repeat sounds or words over and over? It's possible that they may be exhibiting developmental stuttering.

It is quite common for many children to go through periods of developmental dysfluency as they are learning to speak (ex. "Mommy, I-I-I...want to show you something"). A child's language skills develop at such a rapid rate and often their motor system has a difficult time keeping up. These dysfluent speech patterns may begin as early as two years of age and most often decrease between the ages of three to five.

Certain factors, however, may indicate that your child is more at-risk for chronic stuttering. The following factors indicate that a speech and language evaluation may be warranted:

- Family history of stuttering
- Onset of stuttering occurs after the age of 3 ½
- Stuttering persists longer than 6-12months
- The child has other speech-language concerns

There are many ways that you can support the development of your child's fluency skills. The following handout describes seven tips for talking with your child.

www.ColumbusSpeech.org

510 E. North Broadway · Columbus, OH · 43214

P: 614.263.5151 · VP: 614.429.1382



7 tips for talking with your child

Experts agree that most children who stutter benefit from taking time to speak at a rate that promotes fluency. These guidelines represent a number of ways that adults around that child can help promote the child's fluency.

1 Reduce the pace. Speak with your child in an unhurried way, pausing frequently. Wait a few seconds after your child finishes before you begin to speak. Your own easy relaxed speech will be far more effective than any advice such as “slow down” or “try it again slowly. For some children, it is also helpful to introduce a more relaxed pace of life for awhile.

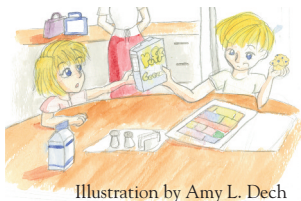


Illustration by Amy L. Dech

2 Full listening. Try to increase those times that you give your child your undivided attention and are really listening. This does not mean dropping everything every time she speaks.

3 Asking questions. Asking questions is a normal part of life – but try to resist asking one after the other. Sometimes it is more helpful to comment on what your child has said and wait.

4 Turn taking. Help all members of the family take turns talking and listening. Children find it much easier to talk when there are fewer interruptions.

5 Building confidence. Use descriptive praise to build confidence. An example would be “I like the way you picked up your toys. You’re so helpful,” instead of “that’s great.” Praise strengths unrelated to talking as well such as athletic skills, being organized, independent, or careful.

6 Special times. Set aside a few minutes at a regular time each day when you can give your undivided attention to your child. This quiet calm time — no TV, iPad or phones — can be a confidence builder for young children. As little as five minutes a day can make a difference.

7 Normal rules apply. Discipline the child who stutters just as you do your other children and just as you would if he didn’t stutter.