

When should I refer for speech therapy?

Speech therapy does not cure stuttering, but can help make talking easier. Sometimes an SLP will work with a student directly; other times working with parents and teachers to change environmental factors is best. Refer to an SLP if you notice any of the following:

- A high number of word or sounds repeated, especially if there is tension in the mouth, neck or throat.
- “Blocking”, when the student is trying to talk but no words come out, or facial grimaces while talking.
- Frustration because the student gets stuck and cannot say what they want.
- Avoiding talking in class or with peers, reluctance to answer questions, or “shyness” about sharing ideas.



Resources

National Stuttering Association
<http://www.westutter.org/>

Stuttering Foundation
<http://www.stutteringhelp.org/>

American Speech Hearing Association
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/stuttering.htm>

For more information, contact:

Stuttering: Questions and Answers for Teachers



www.MsPetersenSLP.wordpress.com



What is stuttering?

Stuttering is the disruption of fluent speech. People who stutter “get stuck” on words, phrases or sounds. They may repeat these words or sounds multiple times. They may “block” and not be able to say anything at all. Stuttering is involuntary; the person who is stuttering does not have the ability to stop stuttering. It is not a choice, or something caused by bad habits.

What causes stuttering?

Stuttering is a multifactorial disorder, which means it is influenced by many different things. It has genetic causes, which we know because stuttering tends to run in families. Stuttering can be triggered by emotions, stress, or particular situations, but it is NOT caused by these things. Stuttering is not caused by parenting style, bad habits, or babytalk. It is neurological, and involuntary.

Is there a cure?

There is no cure for stuttering. Children who begin stuttering after age 4, or who continue stuttering beyond preschool, are classified as having a persistent stutter and will not grow out of stuttering. Speech therapy can help a child or adult speak more easily, but cannot cure the underlying condition. Persistent stuttering is permanent.

Does stuttering stay the same over a person’s lifetime?

Stuttering is unpredictable, and impacted by many factors. It can be triggered by strong emotions (feeling excited, nervous, or scared), by particular people, by specific words or sounds, by life changes (moving, new baby in the family) or even by growth spurts or puberty.

Stuttering severity is often cyclical, so stuttering might be mild for a time, then increase and be moderate or severe, then come back down to mild or even imperceptible. These cycles are normal, and can happen at any time during a person’s life.

Speech therapy can help get stuttering under control, and support a person who stutters as they manage their stuttering.

What can I do for my student?

- **Listen attentively.**
Don’t interrupt or say words for your student.
- **Avoid competition among classmates when speaking.**
Make sure everyone has lots of time to express their thoughts .
- **Model a slow, relaxed speaking style**
with short phrases and pauses in between thoughts. This helps reduce pressure on all students to speak quickly.
- **Be honest.**
It is okay to acknowledge that your student is struggling with his/her speech. Talking about stuttering openly can help reduce anxiety about stuttering.
- **Accommodate.**
Students who stutter may prefer not to be called on unexpectedly in class, or may be nervous about public speaking. Accommodations such as giving oral presentations in a small group, or giving written answers instead of oral answers can work. Ask your student what will help them the most. Every student is different, and so is every stutter!