



Developmental Dysfluency or Stuttering?

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

As much as 80% of children have dysfluent speech during early childhood. It is not uncommon for kids to go back and forth between periods of fluency and dysfluency, especially when excited, tired or rushed. Usually, this is **developmental dysfluency** and will often disappear as a child masters articulation and communication skills.

For others, dysfluency will remain or will return in a more severe and long-lasting pattern called **stuttering**. This occurs when the natural flow of speech is interrupted. Usually, stuttering begins between the ages of 2-5, with a gradual onset. Although the exact cause is unknown, it is often genetic and a result of difficulty in coordinating the speech muscles in the presence of certain external demands. Risks and symptoms include:

- Prolonging sounds
- Inability to make certain sounds
- Difficulty repeating sounds

FACTS ABOUT STUTTERING:

- Affects about 1% of the world's population
- 4 times more common among boys than girls
- Stuttering usually begins in childhood
- Stuttering behaviors develop and vary throughout the lifespan
- Many people report significant variability—sometimes stuttering a lot, sometimes a little
- Stuttering can feel like out-of-control speech that is intermittent and unpredictable. This can cause embarrassment, anxiety and fear.

HOW TO HELP A CHILD WHO STUTTERS:

- Don't show a child if you are upset about his/her speech.
- Look at a child when he/she is speaking and show by your expressions that you are interested in what he/she is saying.
- Don't supply words or interrupt. Let a child get his/her words out independently.
- Don't force a child to hurry by suggesting they talk faster or get to the point.
- Don't ask a child to stop and start over when he/she stutters.
- Notice and minimize times of emotional tension when stuttering may be more severe.
- Model a relaxed manner of speech. Remain calm, unhurried and reassuring.
- Talk openly about stuttering if he/she expresses a desire to do so, but do not make a big issue about it.

HAVE A CONCERN?

- Seek a qualified and experienced speech language pathologist with expertise in this area.
- Seek help as early as possible to educate both you and the child in the early therapeutic interventions that are most effective.
- Under public law, stuttering is considered a disorder for which public schools are required to provide competent assistance to a child.

Call Child & Family Development to schedule a free phone intake!