

# ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF SPEECH AND HEARING



## Stuttering is not a clutter in life

Having a conversation with others is easy when our speech is clear enough to understand. But, talking to people can be hard if you stutter and may get stuck on certain words or sounds. Stuttering is a speech disorder characterized by repetition of sounds, syllables, or words.



## Is Stuttering a condition of concern?

We all have times when we do not speak smoothly. We may add a few sounds or words like, "uh" or "you know" to keep the conversation going. Or, we may say a sound or word more than once. These are called disfluencies.

While, stuttering is more than just disfluencies. It may include tension and negative feelings about talking. It also may get in the way of how one speaks to others. In order to hide their stuttering, they may avoid certain words or situations.

## Characteristics of Stuttering

Stuttering, also known as stammering, is a speech disorder where an individual repeats or prolongs words, syllables, or phrases. It is a developmental speech disorder, which usually appears in children between the ages of 3 and 8 years. A child who stutters often repeats words or parts of words, and tends to prolong certain speech sounds. They may also find it harder to start some words. Some may become tense when they start to speak, they may blink rapidly, and their lips or jaw may tremble as they try to communicate verbally.

## Types of Stuttering

Stuttering is categorized into two types namely, developmental stuttering and neurogenic stuttering. Developmental stuttering is the most common form of stuttering that occurs in young children while they are still learning speech and language skills. It may run in families and research has shown that genetic factors contribute to this type of stuttering. While, neurogenic stuttering may occur after a stroke, head trauma, or other type of brain injury. With this form of stuttering, the brain may have difficulty in coordinating the different brain regions involved in speaking, resulting in problems in production of clear, fluent speech.

Even psychological factors may make stuttering worse for people who already stutter. For instance, stress, embarrassment, and anxiety can make the stutter more pronounced; but they are not generally seen as the underlying cause. In summary, what causes stuttering isn't answered till date. The exact cause of stuttering remains unproven but it is likely multifactorial.

## Prevalence of Stuttering

The overall incidence of stuttering is about 1%, but in the preschool and school populations it is around 4%. Stuttering affects more boys than girls. Boys are 2 to 3 times as likely to stutter as girls and as they get older this gender difference increases; the number of boys who continue to stutter is three to four times larger than the number of girls. About 80% of those who stutter will outgrow their disability, but there is no way of guaranteeing that this may happen. Approximately 75 percent of children recover from stuttering. For the remaining 25 percent who continue to stutter, stuttering can persist as a lifelong communication disorder.

## How to live with Stuttering?

Parents and family play an important role making the stuttering condition simple and easy for the children. They should help their child's confidence by remaining patient. Avoid certain situations that will make the stuttering worse. Encourage conversation in less stressful situations. Stay positive and make eye contact with the child while he or she is talking. This will make them feel more relaxed. Family dinners, car rides, and other engaging family time will give your child the opportunity to practice speaking exercises to reduce their stutter.

## AIISH to the rescue

The Fluency unit at AIISH provides comprehensive assessment and management to children and adults with various fluency disorders including stuttering. Further, counseling and guidance are also provided. International Stuttering Awareness Day is commemorated every year during October third week to create awareness among the general public regarding the fluency disorders through orientation, exhibitions, competitions to students and clients with fluency disorders.

## Conclusion

Stuttering conditions tend to change from day to day. One may have times when they are fluent and times when they stutter more. No one knows why stuttering occurs, so there is no way to prevent or avoid it. But, once one suspects or notices stuttering, it shouldn't be ignored.

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