

# Talking Matters

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Helping your child to reach their potential



## Stuttering in Preschoolers

*Stuttering is a disruption in the flow of speech. Research indicates that stuttering occurs in around 5% of children under the age of five years. Stuttering is not related to the child's personality or intelligence and is not caused by the way parents interact with their child. Stuttering can be effectively treated in the preschool years by a speech pathologist.*

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines stuttering as a “disorder in the rhythm of speech, in which the individual knows precisely what he wishes to say, but at the time is unable to say it because of an involuntary, repetitive prolongation or cessation of a sound”. Stuttering is more common in boys than girls, has a genetic link and is thought to be related to the processing of messages in the brain. The exact cause is unknown.



Stuttering most commonly begins between ages two and five years. Some children in this age range go through a period of “normal non-fluency”- stuttering that disappears in time without therapy. It is hard to tell which children will grow out of stuttering and which will continue to have difficulties. Any child who is stuttering for 3 to 6 months or more should have an assessment with a speech pathologist, as therapy is most effective in the preschool years.

### Stuttering behaviours

Each child's pattern is different. Children who stutter will show at least one or more of these behaviours:

**Repetitions:** These can be of sounds “I want a b-b-b-banana”; syllables “I want a ba-ba-ba-banana”; whole words “I want-want-want a banana”; or phrases “I want a –I want a - I want a banana”. They can be in the beginning, middle and ends of sentences, but beginnings are most common.

**Blocking:** This is when airflow stops and the child has difficulty getting any sound out.

**Prolongations:** This is when the child seems to stretch a sound out “I waaaaaaaaant a banana”.

**Interjections:** These are the frequent use of words like “um”. “I um, um, um want um, um, um a banana”.

**Other behaviours** can include tightness in the muscles of the face, movements in the face such as blinking, body movements, reduced eye contact and avoiding certain words or talking in certain situations.

**Remember if you are at all concerned about your child's speech pattern contact a speech pathologist as treatment is most effective in the preschool years.**



### Preschool Stuttering

Based on information from Latrobe University Preschool Stuttering Website  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hcs/projects/preschoolstuttering>