

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

How a Stammer Might Progress

As children become older they may become aware of their speech hesitations. They may start to use 'tricks' to help say, or avoid using saying words. Children may do this when they feel that they are losing control. You might notice the following -

- Signs of physical tension or struggle e.g. facial grimaces
- Body movements at the same time as the stammer e.g. tapping the foot, swinging the arm or nodding the head. These movements are like a 'kick start' to force the word out.
- Running out of breath in the middle of a sentence or speaking when breathing in.
- Using 'filler' words e.g. well, like, you know, uhm etc to fill in time until the word comes out.
- Talking less or avoiding some situations that might be tricky, e.g. talking in a large group, in a shop or on the phone etc.
- Changing words in mid-sentence or stopping and starting sentences.
- Pretending not to hear a question or pretending they don't know the answer.
- Looking away or down when stammering.
- Some children may become very anxious about the talking difficulty and you may see disrupted sleep or a change in behaviour e.g. bedwetting etc.

What can be done to help?

A speech and language therapist will ask questions to find out what is affecting your child's talking. They will then work with you to help your child talk more easily. Every child is different and might need different support. Small changes in everyday activities can help your child to enjoy talking and talk more easily. Some children may require a more direct approach to help with the stammer. With younger children this might be special talk sessions with you. Older children may learn techniques to help control the stammer and to cope with the stammer more easily.

Further information can be found on the website for the British Stammering Association (www.stamma.org)