

## Does your Young Child Stammer?



### Information for Parents/Carers

### DO:

- Listen to what your child is saying not how he is saying it.
- Slow down your own rate of talking.
- Encourage a relaxed atmosphere.
- Stay calm when you are talking.
- Talk about your child's speech with them if they want to.
- Have uninterrupted times with your child.
- Avoid giving the impression that stammering is wrong.
- Reassure them that talking is hard sometimes.

### DON'T:

- Say "take a deep breath".
- Draw attention to the stammer
- Finish sentences or hurry your child
- Interrupt them
- Speak for them
- Tell them to 'stop and start again'
- Talk about the child's difficulty in front of them.
- Lose eye contact – this can indicate impatience and/or boredom.
- Tell them off for dysfluent speech.
- Compare them with other children.
- Ask lots of questions.
- This advice should be followed unless otherwise advised by a specialist Speech and Language Therapist

### Where can I get more information?

- British Stammering Association  
Tel: 0208 983 1003  
Helpline: 0845 603 2001  
Email: mail@stammer.demon.co.uk  
Website: www.stammering.org
- 'Helping children cope with stammering' by Jackie Turnbull & Trudy Stewart
- 'If your child stutters – questions and answers'
- Stuttering foundation of America
- 'Stammering in Young Children' by - Ann Urwin

#### **SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY DEPARTMENT**

NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney  
Cranbrook Centre  
Northgate Hospital  
Northgate Street  
Great Yarmouth  
Norfolk NR30 1BU  
Tel: 01493 337861

#### **OR YOUR LOCAL CLINIC**

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The hospital is able to arrange for an interpreter to assist you in communicating effectively with staff through INTRAN. If you need an interpreter or a person to sign, please let us know.

If you require a large print version of this booklet, please contact PALS on 01493 453240

## Does your child stammer?

Learning to talk, like learning to walk, can be a bumpy ride and doesn't happen straight away. Young children often stop, pause, start again and stumble over words when they are learning to talk.

Between the ages of 2 and 5 years it is normal for children to get stuck and repeat words whilst they are sorting out what to say next and this usually disappears as they get older.

However, some children, particularly boys, may continue to find talking difficult and may stammer/stutter.

## When should I be concerned?

- The stammering has lasted longer than 6 months.
- There is a family history of stammering.
- Stammering is so frequent or severe that it interferes with talking.
- Your child becomes distressed or frustrated.

## What is stammering/stuttering?

Stammering varies in children but these are the most common features:-

- Repeating parts of words or whole words, e.g. "mu-mu-mummy"
- Cannot seem to get the words out for a few seconds (called 'blocking'), e.g. " \_\_\_\_\_ it's mine".
- Making sounds longer in words, e.g. "I want a ssssstory".
- Unusual breathing sounds.
- Avoidance of some words and situations.
- Stammering/stuttering is often referred to as 'dysfluent speech'

## Why is my child stammering?

The exact cause of stammering is not known, but is usually felt to be a combination of factors.

There is no evidence to suggest that parents cause stammering, but it is 4 times more common in boys than in girls and it can run in families.

## Are there situations that may affect the stammer?

Children's speech can fluctuate from one day to the next. Stammering may come and go and your child may be fluent for days, weeks or months but then suddenly deteriorate again.

Factors that can affect fluency include:

- The Situation, e.g. if it's noisy, rushed, relaxed, at home, at nursery etc.
- Who the child is talking to, e.g. friend, adult, stranger, parent.
- How the child is feeling, e.g. tired, excited, anxious, confident.
- How complicated what he wants to say is, e.g. if words are few/many, new/familiar etc

## What can I do?

- Ask a registered Speech and Language Therapist for advice. You can refer your child directly for an appointment by ringing 01493 337861 (Great Yarmouth) or 01502 587311, ext. 290 (Lowestoft)
- In the meantime try the following advice overleaf and inform all other adults in contact with your child to do so also.