

## Help Your Child Speak More Fluently

Focus on what your child is saying, not on how it's said.

Don't interrupt and don't speak for your child. Let them finish what they were saying. Don't correct your child's speech.

Help your child through a difficult stuttering situation by staying calm and keeping eye contact.

Talk to your child in an unrushed and calming way. Make small 2-3 second pauses before answering. This way there is less sense of hurry.

Speak with clear simple sentences. Ask one thing at a time.

Try to make speech situations calm by shutting out excess noise e.g. by turning off the television.

When the child is speaking more fluently, give him a lot of opportunities to speak. When the stutter is more present, sing nursery rhymes and songs with the child and ask fewer questions.

Treat a stuttering child like you would treat any other children. Don't let the child do anything you wouldn't let other children do. Teach stuttering children not to interrupt others.

## More Information

For more information on stuttering, speech therapy and courses, turn to your local health center or speech therapist. You can also contact the Association of the Finnish Stutterers or The Finnish Association of Speech Therapists.

### The Association of the Finnish Stutterers

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# STUTTERING

For Parents and Other Caretakers  
of Small Children



The Association of  
the Finnish Stutterers

[www.ankytys.fi](http://www.ankytys.fi)  
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The speech of a small child may be influent in many ways. It is normal that children repeat a word or the beginning of a word in their speech a few times. It is called stuttering only if the repetitions last longer and are more common. Stuttering may be irregular and there may be repetitions inside a word. In addition to repetition, the child might prolong a sound or the speech might be blocked for a moment.

## Did You Know?

- There are always multiple reasons behind stuttering. It is believed that a physiological tendency is the primary reason for stuttering. In addition, one or more factors issuing from the child or the environment are needed to trigger the stuttering. The tendency to stutter can be inherited.
- Children of different ages may begin to stutter. Stuttering often begins when the child starts using two word phrases. Even school aged children may start stuttering.
- The rehabilitation prognosis for stutters is good. It is estimated that 80 % of stuttering children learn to speak fluently before adulthood.
- Stuttering is far more common among boys than girls.
- Stuttering occurs as repeating syllables or words, prolonging sounds or blocks in speech.
- Movements, such as blinking and nodding or pitch changes can occur when stuttering.
- The quality and quantity of a child's stuttering can vary with time and situation.
- Small children don't always seem to notice their stutter. Some children may feel bad about their difficulty in speaking.

## Treating Stuttering

For the most part, a stuttering child speaks fluently. Among small children, supporting the natural fluency of speech is important. It is beneficial to take notice of the situations in which the child is able to speak especially fluently. Are these situations unhurried ones where the adult has time for the child? Or is the speech more fluent when there is no background noise? Does speaking more slowly help the child speak more fluently? Does avoiding complicated and long sentences make speaking easier for the child?

You should contact a speech therapist when a light stutter has persisted for more than six months or if the symptoms are so pronounced that they bother the child or the parents.

In speech therapy, the fluency of speech is improved with play-like exercises. The parents of small children take part in the therapy and apply the methods learned there in everyday life. Other adults besides the parents should also be aware of the means by which they can support the child's fluency.

You should talk to your child about stuttering if you see your child being frustrated with the lack of fluency in speech. When talking about stuttering to a child, use a calming tone and use concrete terms when describing it (e.g. the words bounce). You should also talk about stuttering with anyone with whom the child has contact in everyday life.

The families of stuttering children can attend adaptation courses that give parents and children the chance to meet others who share the problem and meet experts. Speech exercises are also a part of the course program.

