

Health Tips

from New London Hospital

Stuttering In Children



Dr. Sarah Lester

Stuttering is a speech disorder that involves hesitation, repetition, or stumbling while speaking. At a young age, it is common for children to stutter when they are learning how to talk. After some time, the majority of children grow out of this phase. Only a small percentage, less than 1%, continues to stutter. This condition can progress into adulthood if not treated.

Stress, fatigue, and excitement are all possible causes of stuttering in children. Children may also stutter when they are feeling rushed, ridiculed, self-conscious, or pressured. Other causes may be due to family history or neurological deficits.

Here are some ways to determine if your child stutters: may use "um" or "eh" in the middle of phrases or find it hard to start words; may make certain words sound longer than they should be; may repeat words or parts of words; may get tense when they try to speak; may blink their eyes rapidly; or their lips or jaws may tremble as they try to communicate.

There is no one best treatment option; it all depends on what might work best for your child. When at home with a child who stutters, try to avoid expressing too much comment or concern with the stuttering. Listen patiently to your child with all your attention and make sure you do not concentrate on your child's disability. Reading aloud and singing are helpful activities, as studies have shown that children do not stutter when reading or singing.

If your child continues to stutter at a later age in his or her childhood, it may be time to consider asking your doctor about speech therapy.

Sarah Lester, MD is a pediatrician at New London Pediatric Care Center in Georges Mills. Call 526-5363 for more information.

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