

# SpeechEasy helps stutterers speak easily

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Stutterers may speak more clearly with a device called SpeechEasy, which U.S. researchers said helps to take the sting out of stuttering.

The SpeechEasy fits in the ear and is based on "the choral effect," a phenomenon in which stutterers don't stutter when speaking the same material in unison with another speaker, or in a chorus, ABC News said.

The device does not cure stuttering, developers said. It aids speech, just as eyeglasses improve vision.

When using the SpeechEasy, stutterers hear a delayed playback of their own voice, at a slightly different pitch, emulating a choral effect, said developer Joseph Kalinowski, a stutterer himself and a speech pathologist at East Carolina State University.

"This is the beginning of the new era for the person who stutters," Kalinowski said. "Genetics and brain scans all point to a biological origin."

Dennis Drayna, a geneticist at the National Institutes of Health, called stuttering a medical mystery. His work traces the cause of stuttering to human genes.

A genetic cause, Drayna says, "could allow us... to guide therapy strategies for different groups of people, depending on what mutation you do or don't have."

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