

What is stuttering?

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Disfluency in speech, including stumbling over words, and word or phrase repetition, likely affects up to 5% of all children at some point in their development, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. And it's typical for children to experience alternating periods of fluency and disfluency as they develop. For most children, though, most disfluencies go away on their own.

Stuttering, also called stammering or childhood-onset fluency disorder, is when normal developmental disfluencies become a chronic condition that persists into adulthood. Stuttering is characterized by frequent and significant problems with normal fluency and flow of [speech](#). People who stutter know what they want to say, but they have difficulty saying it.

Stuttering may worsen when people are excited, tired or under stress, or when they are feeling self-conscious, hurried or pressured. Situations such as speaking in front of a group or talking on the phone can be particularly difficult for people who stutter. However, most people who stutter can speak without stuttering when they talk to themselves and when they sing or speak in unison with someone else.

After a comprehensive evaluation by a speech-language pathologist, a decision about the best treatment approach can be made. Several approaches are available to treat [children](#) and adults who stutter. Because of varying individual issues and needs, a method or combination of methods that's helpful for one person may not be as effective for another. Treatment can include speech therapy, [electronic devices](#) to enhance fluency, [cognitive behavioral therapy](#), and, for children, parental involvement in practicing techniques at home.

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