

Stuttering

Stuttering is a fluency disorder. It is also known as 'stammering'. Stuttering is characterised by disruptions in the pronunciation of speech sounds, which may present in the form of repetitions, prolongations or speech blocks. One or any combination of these behaviours may be observed consistently or variably. The frequency, duration, type, and severity of stuttering can vary greatly from person to person and from situation to situation.

The exact cause of stuttering is currently unknown. Studies suggest that there are genetic factors and that abnormalities in speech motor control are implicated. Some stuttering have neurological roots and can occur after brain injuries (e.g. stroke). Stuttering may also arise from emotional or mental stressors.

Stuttering may have a devastating impact on an individual's academic, emotional, social, and occupational potential and development.

Stuttering in children is generally more treatable than in adults. With appropriate intervention, prognosis for recovery is good in younger children, although older individuals can also benefit from therapy. On the other hand, there is no guarantee that a child will outgrow stuttering without intervention.

How is it treated?

Clinical evidence shows that children who stutter can benefit from treatment provided by speech therapists. Intervention approaches that are shown to efficiently reduce stuttering include behavioural treatments (e.g. Lidcombe Programme) and techniques to induce changes in motor patterns (e.g. Smooth Speech).

What does rehabilitation involve?

The overall aim of rehabilitation is to eliminate stuttering behaviours, or to reduce them to the point that they are not noticeable.

There are different approaches that are suitable for individuals at different developmental stages. For example, research has shown that a younger child may benefit from the Lidcombe Programme, while an older child or adult may benefit from Smooth Speech techniques.

A comprehensive case history will be obtained followed by clinical evaluations of the individual's stuttering behaviours, in the form of baseline stuttering severity and percentage of syllables stuttered. The speech therapist will then recommend the appropriate programme for the individual and/or their caregiver to carry out.

Useful websites

[Stuttering](#)

[Lidcombe Programme](#)