

# Stuttering

*Stuttering is a complex and highly variable communication disorder. Although the exact cause of stuttering remains unknown, it is thought that people who stutter have difficulty with speech motor coordination*

## What is stuttering?

Stuttering is the involuntary disruption of normal speech fluency. These involuntary disruptions may interfere with normal communication and may impact on a person's ability to communicate in some speaking situations, as well as their social and emotional wellbeing.

## What does stuttering look like?

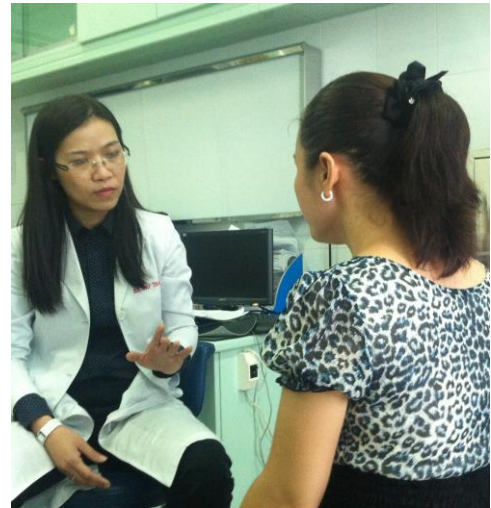
Stuttering may present differently in each person and their stuttering may look and sound different. Types of stuttering include:

### Repetitive movements

- A sound (part of a word) may be repeated (e.g. b-b- beach)
- A whole word may be repeated (e.g. and-and-and),
- A whole phrase may be repeated (e.g. and the- and the- and the-).

### Fixed postures

- A block is a fixed posture in which someone may become "stuck" on a sound and look like they are unable to get it out and it may seem like they are holding their breath (e.g. 'm-----ay')
- A prolongation is a fixed posture in which someone may become "stuck" on a sound in a word and will continue saying the sound (e.g. 'mmmmmay')



### Secondary behaviours

- Fillers in speech (e.g. over-use of 'filler words' such as "um" and "ah" and are not intended to be said)
- Facial grimacing (e.g. wrinkling of the nose)
- Blinking (i.e. increased blinking when 'stuttering')

### Speaking conditions that may make stuttering worse include:

- Speaking in front of a large audience
- Speaking to someone that has a higher "status" (e.g. a manager or employer)
- Speaking to strangers
- Being tired
- Feeling anxious

### How common is stuttering?

Over 70 million people in the world stutter. Males have been identified as being approximately 4 to 5 times more likely than females to be affected by stuttering.



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There is a higher chance of having a stutter if there is a family history of it.

It is thought that around 5% of the entire world's population have been affected by stuttering at some point in their life.

## When does stuttering start?

The onset of stuttering is usually between 2-3 years of age and is often very variable. A child may be speaking normally one day, and may be stuttering the next.

There is a chance that if a child begins stuttering, they will "grow out of it" and this is known as *natural recovery*. However, many children will continue to stutter and require treatment.

If you think your child is stuttering then you should contact a speech therapist and they will be able to advise you what steps to take next.

## Who will diagnose stuttering and how?

A speech therapist will be able to conduct an assessment on the person who is stuttering will determine the severity of the stutter and what treatment would be best.

During the assessment a speech therapist may:

- Ask questions relating to the stuttering
- Measure the severity of stuttering during different conversations
- Discuss treatment options

## Is there treatment available?

Effective treatments are available for both children and adults. Treatments for children focus on eliminating stuttering and treatment for adults focus on controlling stuttering behaviours and

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reducing social anxiety that might be associated with the disorder. A speech therapist will be able to help you advise you on the best treatments available.

In Vietnam, there is an online self-help group called ECHO Vietnam. Members also meet regularly offline to learn about stuttering, support each other and practice smooth speech (and other treatment techniques). You can join ECHO Vietnam at <http://www.echovietnam.vn/>

## How can you communicate with someone who stutters?

It is important that you don't treat a person who stutters, differently. You should:

- Allow them to finish their sentence.
- Do not interrupt them when they are talking, even if they seem to be getting "stuck" on some of their words.
- Do not correct them; correcting someone that is stuttering may cause them to feel frustrated or become anxious, and both of these may make the stuttering worse.

For more information on speech pathology, visit the Trinh Foundation website:

<http://trinhfoundation.org>

Contact details for Vietnamese trained speech therapist are provided on the Trinh Foundation Australia website.