

## Helping your young child who stammers

Talking smoothly is a skill that develops gradually, and many young children will repeat whole words and parts of words when they begin using longer sentences. Stammering, which is also known as stuttering, can occur at any age, but it typically begins between the ages of two and five years. Some parents notice a pattern regarding the time or situation when their child tends to stammer more, e.g. when they are tired or excited, and times when their child tends to stammer less like when they are playing calmly. Whereas for other children stammering appears to be unpredictable. The presentation of stammering is different for every child, however stammering behaviours can include:

- repeating the whole word, like “but-but-but”
- repeating parts of the word, like “c-c-c-can”;
- stretching sounds, like “ssssso”; and
- the word appears to ‘get stuck’.

Some children may experience feelings such as frustration and anger about their talking, others appear unconcerned. Some children change words, and some avoid speaking situations such as answering questions in class whilst others are keen to talk in all situations.

Stammering is complex but it is not caused by parents and in fact many parents are using lots of helpful ideas to support their child. An assessment by a speech and language therapist can help you understand why your child may have started stammering and how you can help your child.

Some websites that you might find helpful are:

- The Michael Palin Centre for Stammering: [www.stammeringcentre.org/mpc-home](http://www.stammeringcentre.org/mpc-home);
- The British Stammering Association: [www.stammering.org](http://www.stammering.org); and
- The Irish Stammering Association: [www.stammeringireland.ie](http://www.stammeringireland.ie)

For further information please contact your local Speech and Language Therapy Department.