

Disclaimer

Follow any specific additional advice from your speech and Language Therapist. Make sure new people in your child or young person's life have access to this information.

The Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service in St Helens has an open referral system, which means that any person in the child's life can refer with permission from the child's legal guardian.

To make a referral, please complete our referral form ensuring all information is included and send it to: mcn-tr.sthelens-slt@nhs.net

Please visit our website for further information: <https://www.merseycare.nhs.uk/our-services/st-helens/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy>

Our patients matter

Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust listens and responds to patients and their carers to help improve the services we deliver. If you have any comments, compliments or concerns you can speak with a member of staff or contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Complaints Team.

Phone: **0151 471 2377** Freephone: **0800 328 2941**
Email: palsandcomplaints@merseycare.nhs.uk

To request this leaflet in an alternative format or language, please speak to a member of staff.

Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
V7 Building, Kings Business Park, Prescot, Merseyside, L34 1PJ

St Helens Paediatric Speech and
Language Therapy 0-18 years

Supporting younger people who stammer

Patient information leaflet



What is Stammering?

While children are learning to talk (especially between the ages of two and five years), it is typical for them to go through periods of Dysfluency. This is sometimes called stammering, stuttering or normal non-fluency. They may stop, pause and start again and stumble over words. Many children grow out of this phase very quickly but others may continue to find talking difficult.

Parents and families do not cause stammering. Research tells us that it is likely a combination of things including: physical factors, speech and language needs, personality and the communication environment. By making some small changes in how you communicate with your child you can really make a difference to the fluency of their speech.

How can I help my child to be more fluent?

- Be aware of your own rate of speech, think about your breathing and use of natural pauses. If you're talking at a more natural pace, your child is likely to mirror you
- If you ask more open questions like 'what have you done today?' your child may be tempted to tell you they are more likely about every minute of their day. If they have a lot to tell you, they are more likely to be dysfluent. Instead ask specific questions like 'did you make anything at nursery?' or 'what did you have for lunch?'
- Try to limit the number of questions you ask and give your child plenty of time to reply. Instead of asking questions, make comments. Rather than asking 'Did you have a nice day today?' say 'I bet you had a nice day today'
- Face your child and get down to their level. Maintain typical eye contact when your child is Dysfluent
- Try to find five minutes in the day when your child is given your undivided attention in a calm and relaxed atmosphere with no distractions.

Things that others can do to help

It is tempting to allow the child to interrupt at times when they are being Dysfluent, however this can be unhelpful in supporting the fluency of their speech. Explain the importance of turn taking to your family.

- Focus on what your child is saying not how they are saying it
- Provide specific praise for the things they do well
- There may be times you're your child's stammer is more noticeable and when it less noticeable. Have a think about when these could be, for example, is your child's speech more dysfluent when they are tired, excited or when there has been a sudden change to their routine? Are there any alterations you could make to help improve the fluency of their speech at these times, for example, letting them know about the change in their routine in advance and preparing them for it or bringing bedtime forward a little
- Getting enough sleep and exercise as well as having a healthy diet and a structured routine can help with the fluency of your child's speech.

Where can I find more information?

You may find the following websites helpful:

British Stammering Association: www.stamma.org

Michael Palin Centre, a specialist centre for stammering in London: www.michaelpalincenreforstammering.org