

What You Need to Know about Stammering

The cause, prevalence and recovery:

- People who stammer cannot help it. Stammering is caused by a slight timing difference in how parts of the brain work together to produce speech (a neurological cause).
- There is a genetic link in some families.
- 5-8% of children stammer. For the 1% of people who continue to stammer, it can be managed but not cured.

Stammering is:

- A word used to describe a specific type of talking that is not fluent. Stammering and stuttering mean the same thing
- Repeating and/or stretching the first part of a word, e.g. 'm...m...m...m...my' or 'mmmmmy', and/or getting stuck on saying a word without any sound at all coming out (blocking).
- Like an iceberg. There can be more going on under the surface than other people realise. The hidden parts of stammering include:
 - avoidance, e.g. of words, speaking, people or situations
 - strong feelings, e.g. worry, sadness, embarrassment, fear of stammering
 - unhelpful thoughts, e.g. 'I mustn't stammer', 'People might laugh at me if..'

Sometimes people who stammer develop learned behaviours, e.g. put in extra sounds or words, e.g. 'um', 'like', 'uh', develop extra body movements to help force the word out, lose eye contact, talk quickly or try to force out their stammered words.

Stammering is different from everyday dysfluencies such as hesitations and word repetitions.

Other factors that impact on a stammer are:

- A person's speech and language ability.
- The interaction style that people use to talk to people who stammer, e.g. they may speak too fast or ask a question and not give enough time for a response
- Emotional factors, e.g. sensitivity and anxiety about stammering in front of other people
- Environmental factors, e.g. new environments and new people, rushed conversations, being put on the spot