

# Stuttering

*“For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”*  
Timothy 1:7

Stuttering, also known as stammering, is familiar to most of us. It includes repeating a sound again and again, or long pauses with no sound. This condition can really affect a person's emotional wellbeing and feelings of self-confidence.

There are many misconceptions about stuttering, and those who experience this frustrating condition suffer as much from their problem as they do from those of us who don't understand the facts regarding stuttering.

Stuttering does not indicate a lack of intelligence, or a nervous personality. It isn't catchy—your children won't begin stuttering because they play with a child who does. We do not help a stutterer by telling them to “take a breath first” or “think before you speak.” Truly, this is not the answer, and bringing attention to the stuttering can make a person feel even more self-conscious. Stress and anxiety do not **cause** stuttering, but they certainly can intensify it.

We have over 3 million stutters in America, and it affects males 3 to 4 times as often as females. It is not uncommon for small children to have a period of stuttering for about 6 months, but  $\frac{3}{4}$  of them will stop stuttering on their own. When children are over 5 years old and begin stuttering, it's probably going to be more of an issue in their lives. There is a lot of research going on in this area, and we are finding out that there are often genetic and neurological causes of stuttering. It runs in families and may be related to allergies.

Recently a link has been found between stuttering and food allergies in some people. The allergic reaction stimulates an area of the nervous system that results in stuttering. While it may seem farfetched, remarkable results have been seen by eliminating certain foods from the diet. So far, the most common offender is gluten. Gluten is found in breads, and in many other foods as well. Foods containing dopamine, such as caffeine, can be also offenders. Sugar, peanut butter, and dairy products may also affect stuttering. The bottom line here is to see an allergist or gastroenterologist and be tested for food allergies. If that is out of reach, a person could simply eliminate ONE food group at a time, and see if there is any improvement. If sugar, for instance, is to be eliminated, be sure to read labels and check to see if there is sugar in the ingredients. Gluten can be hidden in gravies and all sorts of items, so get a list of things with gluten if you would like to eliminate it during your trial.

Regardless of the cause, the way you respond to a stutterer can have a big impact on that person. Especially with children, speak in a calm manner at a slow pace when talking to them, and really listen when they talk to you. Don't ask question after question in quick succession, and build their overall confidence with praise when they do positive things (such as pick up their toys). Treat them just as you would any other child in terms of discipline and activities. If speaking with an adult, be respectful and wait until the words are out – don't try to finish their sentences and avoid looking annoyed.

Info: [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org) or [www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)

Blessings,  
Nurse Karen