

Talking about stuttering

It can be difficult to know how and when to talk about stuttering with your child, or even if it's a good idea or not.

Parents and whānau often worry that talking about stuttering with their child will increase their child's stutter or make them feel more anxious, or that if you don't speak about it, the stuttering will go away. None of these are true.

There are lots of benefits to talking about stuttering with your child, no matter their age and how long they've been stuttering for:

- Talking about stuttering can reassure your child that the way they talk is ok. When stuttering is the 'elephant in the room', i.e, you avoid talking about it, a child can feel like there's something 'wrong' with the way they talk. This can lead to more negative feelings and struggle when talking
- Being open about stuttering creates an environment where your child can talk about how they're feeling and share experiences that they may be having outside of the home
- Talking about stuttering from a young age can help your child develop the confidence, language and skills to educate others and advocate for themselves

When should I talk to my child about their stutter?

You can start talking about stuttering with your child at any time. We encourage parents and whānau to talk about stuttering with their child from a young age.

As a parent or whānau member, you'll have a gut feeling about how often you should talk about stuttering with your child. You might like to talk about it more when your child is feeling upset or worried about their talking.

Is it ok to use the word stuttering?

Absolutely! It's important that your child learns the word 'stutter'. However, when a child is young you may like to use the word 'bumpy' or 'stuck' as this can be easier for them to understand. Many children who are 4-5 years old can learn and use the word 'stutter'.



How do I talk about stuttering with my child?

The way you talk about stuttering with your child will depend on how old they are, their understanding and how aware they are of their talking.

Tips for talking about stuttering

- Use neutral language and tone of voice when talking about stuttering with your child
- Avoid using the words 'bad' and 'good' – these types of words send the message that stuttering is 'bad' and not stuttering is 'good'. Instead, use the words 'more' and 'less' e.g. "Yeah, I noticed that you've been stuttering more today too"
- Avoid giving advice when your child is talking, such as 'slow down' or 'take a breath'. These things can sometimes be helpful, but people who stutter often say that they'd prefer it if people just listened to what they said
- Instead, if you feel that slowing down would be helpful, slow your own rate of talking down a bit – usually people copy what we do
- Take cues from your child as to how often you should talk about stuttering or mention their stuttering

For a young child you could say...

"Do your words ever feel bumpy or stuck when you're talking?" or "Do you ever find it hard to talk?"

"It's ok when your words feel stuck/bumpy, I will listen"

"You have so many big ideas to talk about, and your body is still learning how to talk. It's ok if your words get stuck or come out bumpy sometimes"

"That word was extra stuck, I love that you kept trying and finished your story"

For an older child you could try something like...

"You know how you repeat sounds and get stuck sometimes, that's called a stutter. It's just the way you talk, and it's ok"

"Lots and lots of people in the world stutter, but you might not hear many kids at school do it"

"It looks like you're getting a bit frustrated with your talking today, it's ok, I'm listening and I'll wait for you to finish"

"Awesome job with your talking, even though you got a bit stuck, you kept on going"