



Stuttering

What is stuttering?

Stuttering, also known as stammering, is a physical speech disorder where the rhythm and flow of speech is disrupted. The child knows what he or she wants to say but experiences difficulty saying it at that specific moment. Stuttering is characterised by:

- **Repetitions of sounds or words**
(e.g. "C-c-c-car" or "I-I-I-I-I-I want to go now!")
- **Prolongation of sounds**
(e.g. "ggggggive me!")
- **Pauses whereby no sound is heard**
(e.g. "Wha-----t do you think?")



At times, stuttering may be accompanied by signs of physical tension or struggle. As such, the child can appear anxious.

Stuttering often occurs at ages 2 to 5. During this time, the child may have a vocabulary spurt and will start to put words together to form sentences. It is natural for a child to stutter sometimes at this stage.

What are the causes of stuttering?

There is no one cause of stuttering. Possible causes include:

1. Family history

Stuttering tends to run in the family. It can result from inherited (genetic) abnormalities.



2. Difficulties in speech motor control

Research has shown that difficulties in speech motor control, such as timing, sensory and motor coordination, may contribute to stuttering.



3. Other illnesses

Examples include stroke, traumatic brain injury, or other brain disorders.



It is **not** caused by nervousness, copying others, poor parenting, or an intellectual disorder.



What are the risk factors for stuttering?

Some factors may indicate that your child is more at risk of stuttering. Knowing these factors will help you decide whether your child needs to see a speech therapist. These factors include:

- A family history of stuttering in a parent, sibling or other family members
- Gender (boys are more likely to stutter)
- Stuttering at age 2 years old or later
- Difficulties in speech and language
- Stuttering persists for 6 to 12 months or longer

When should you seek help?

A child may stutter for a few weeks or several months, and the stuttering may come and go. Most children who begin stuttering before the age of 5 often stop stuttering without any need for intervention. Consult your developmental paediatrician if the stuttering:

- Lasts more than 6 months
- Occurs with other speech or language problems
- Occurs with muscle tightening or visible struggles to speak
- Affects the child's ability to effectively communicate at school or in social interactions
- Causes anxiety or emotional problems such as fear or avoidance of situations where speaking is required

How can parents help?

To help your child speak more smoothly:

- Allow talking to be fun and enjoyable.
- Avoid corrections or criticisms such as "slow down," "take your time," or "take a deep breath." These comments, while well-intentioned, may make your child feel more self-conscious.
- Do not tell your child to think before speaking.
- Speak slowly and clearly when talking to your child, or with others in his or her presence. Modeling a slow rate of speech will help with your child's fluency.
- Maintain eye contact and show that you are interested in what your child is saying. Try not to look away or show signs of being upset.
- Let your child speak for himself or herself and to finish thoughts and sentences.
- Interact with your child who stutters just as you would if he or she did not stutter.



Additional resources on stuttering

- Stuttering by American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
www.asha.org
- Brochures by The Stuttering Foundation
www.stutteringhelp.org

NUH Child Development Unit

NUH Child Development Unit is part of the Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute at National University Hospital. The clinic provides multidisciplinary assessments, therapy and holistic management of children with developmental & behavioural disorders from birth to 7 years old. Please make an appointment if you would like to see our paediatricians.

For health information and resources relating to child development, visit:

<https://www.nuh.com.sg/cdu-resources>

<https://www.nuh.com.sg/cdu>



About the National University Centre for Women and Children

National University Centre for Women and Children (NUWoC) is a national university specialist centre that aims to empower women, children and their families to lead healthier lives. We provide comprehensive medical and surgical services ranging from pre-conception to child and maternal health.

NUWoC comprises the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G) and Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute (KTP-NUCMI) of National University Hospital. It focuses on the right-siting of appropriate services in the community and builds complementary services in National University Health System’s (NUHS) centres of excellence – Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Alexandra Hospital.

Through a generous gift from the Estate of Khoo Teck Puat, KTP-NUCMI established an integrated outpatient facility with medical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services for children. We are also the only public specialist centre in Singapore that offers paediatric kidney and liver transplant programmes.

For more information about us, visit www.nuh.com.sg/NUWoC

Children’s Emergency (24-hr)

Location NUH Main Building, Zone F, Level 1
Contact +65 6772 5000

KTP-NUCMI

Location NUH Main Building, Zone E, Level 2
(Accessible via Kent Ridge Wing, Zone C, Level 2, Lift Lobby C)
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri), 8.30am – 12.30pm (Sat)
General Enquiry +65 6772 5736
Appointment Line +65 6908 2222
Email ktpnucmi_appt@nuhs.edu.sg

9a Viva-University Children’s Cancer Centre

Location NUH Medical Centre, Zone B, Level 9
Operating Hours 8am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6772 5030
Email cbccappt@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Children’s Urgent Care Clinic @ Bukit Panjang

Location Junction 10, #01-22
Operating Hours 9am – 11pm daily (including public holidays)
General Enquiry +65 6219 1538
Email childreucc@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Child Development Unit @ JMC

Location Jurong Medical Centre, Level 2
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6665 2530 / 2531
Email cdu@nuhs.edu.sg

NUH Child Development Unit @ Keat Hong

Location Keat Hong Community Club, #03-01
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6769 4537/4637
Email cdu@nuhs.edu.sg

Clinic A22 NUWoC Children’s Clinic @ NTFGH

Location Ng Teng Fong General Hospital
Tower A – NTFGH Clinics, Level 2
Operating Hours 8.30am – 5.30pm (Mon to Fri)
Appointment Line +65 6908 2222
Email appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Our Patient Care Institutions

National University Hospital

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital &
Jurong Community Hospital

Alexandra Hospital

National University Polyclinics

Jurong Medical Centre

National University Cancer Institute, Singapore

National University Heart Centre, Singapore

National University Centre for Oral Health, Singapore

NUHS Diagnostics

NUHS Pharmacy



Scan the QR code for more information on our patient care institutions.



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OneNUHS Hotline: (65) 6908 2222

OneNUHS General Enquiries: contactus@nuhs.edu.sg

OneNUHS Appointments: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

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