

MAY 2018

SNOHOMISH COUNTY CHILD HEALTH NOTES

Promoting partnerships between primary health care providers, families & the community to support early identification of children with special needs and comprehensive care within a primary care Medical Home.

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If Unsure, Refer

SPEECH DISFLUENCY AND STUTTERING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Distinguishing stuttering from age-typical speech disfluency: Many young children experience normal speech disfluency, especially during a period of rapid language development. There are qualitative and quantitative differences between true stuttering and age-typical speech disfluencies that help primary care providers identify children whose speech needs to be more closely monitored. Treatment for stuttering can be very effective in the preschool population. Delaying treatment for too long may increase the risk for persistent stuttering and increase psychosocial consequences of stuttering.

Normal Speech Disfluency is characterized by:

- Easy repetitions of words and phrases (“I want, I want to go..”) with only one or two repetitions
- Interjections (“uh”, “um”) and revisions of phrases

Developmental Stuttering is characterized by:

- Tense or dysrhythmic sounds, syllable and word repetitions (“ma, ma, ma, my name is..”) often with several repetitions
- Sound prolongations (“hhhhhhhhe’s my dad”)
- Sound blockages (“d.....don’t do that!”)

POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS FOR PERSISTENCE OF STUTTERING:

- **Disfluency patterns** – An increase, or little decrease, in the frequency of stuttering during the first 6-12 months after onset and/or a child who makes frequent speech errors such as substituting sounds or leaving sounds out.
- **Time since onset** – Stuttering 6-12 months or longer. Children who begin stuttering before age 3 are more likely to outgrow it within 6 months.
- **Male gender** – The ratio of males-to-females is estimated to be about 2:1 at onset of stuttering, increasing to 4:1 or 5:1 in school-age children.
- **Family history** – A history of stuttering in the family tends to increase the risk for persistent stuttering.

PARENTS WANT TO KNOW WHAT THEY SHOULD DO WHEN THEIR CHILD IS STUTTERING.

Near the onset of stuttering, parents need to be reassured and given enough information so that they will feel comfortable with a period of monitoring. We do not want to tell them to ignore the stuttering, but we do want to reduce the amount of focus and anxiety around the stuttering. The following suggestions may be helpful for parents before they see a Speech-Language Pathologist.

Parents need to know:

- Their child’s stuttering is being monitored
- They have someone to talk to during the monitoring period.
- Their child’s stuttering is not their fault

- There is a very good chance that the stuttering will go away within 12-18 months. But since we can't tell which child will outgrow stuttering and which child will continue to stutter, we'll keep a close eye on it while we monitor it. Treatment may be recommended sooner rather than later in some situations such as when a child begins to exhibit anxiety, frustration, or anger which may indicate developing psychosocial issues.
- Allow the child to finish what they are saying without interruption. Telling a child to slow down or to think before they talk is **not** helpful, and may cause the child to become frustrated. This can take some patience, but is important so that the child feels positive about communication.
- If a child gives up trying to say a word, don't make them to say it. You can consider trying to help them say it, or ask them "were you trying to say _____?"
- Be positive and focus on what your child is saying and not on how they are saying it.
- If the child is having a particularly difficult time and is frustrated or embarrassed, reassure the child that it is OK and sometimes talking is hard.

WHY REFER TO A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST?

- **Parent education and reassurance.** Even though we know many children will eventually stop stuttering, telling a parent to just "wait and see" doesn't do much to alleviate the parents' concerns. An early consult with a Speech-Language Pathologist experienced in the area of fluency disorders can provide the parent with information regarding stuttering, including what to do while we "wait and see" if natural recovery occurs. Parents are reassured when they know that their child's stuttering is being monitored on a regular basis and that they have someone to talk to during the monitoring period.
- **Monitoring early stuttering.** Closely tracking developmental trends in the stuttering for 8-12 months on a monthly or bimonthly basis following the onset of stuttering can lead to better treatment decisions. Initially, brief monitoring sessions will occur in the clinic, but can eventually be completed via email or telephone, depending on the needs of the child and the parent.
- **Early intervention is effective.** Though many children recover from stuttering without treatment, some do not and require therapy. Because of the psychosocial impacts of stuttering even on very young children, early intervention is critical. Research supports effective therapy for preschoolers. One example is the Lidcombe Program that is supported by several studies, including several RCTs. Other evidence-based therapies are in development and new treatment studies are regularly being published (Nye, C. et al, 2013). It is important to work with a Speech-Language Pathologist who regularly pursues continuing education in the area of stuttering.

References:

- Baxter, S. et al, 2016; "Non-pharmacological treatments for stuttering in children and adults: a systematic review and evaluation of clinical effectiveness, and exploration of barriers to successful outcomes"; National Institute for Health Research: Health Technology Assessment, 20(2).
- Reilly, S. et al, 2013; "Natural History of Stuttering to 4 Years of Age: A Prospective Community-Based Study"; Pediatrics, 132(3)
- Additional Information for parents and professionals is available at the Lidcombe Program's Treatment Guide https://sydney.edu.au/health-sciences/asrc/docs/lp_treatment_guide_2016.pdf and at The Stuttering Foundation's web site: www.stutteringhelp.org
- Nye, C. et al, 2013; "Behavioral Stuttering Interventions for Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis"; Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, 56(3).

SNOHOMISH COUNTY SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCES

- For children birth to age 18: Contact: Children with Special Health Care Needs 425.339.8652
- For children under age 3: Contact: Snohomish County Early Intervention Program 425.388.7402
EarlyInterventionProgram@snoco.org
- For children age 3 and older: Contact: Local school district

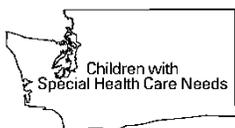
<i>District:</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>District:</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Phone</i>
Arlington	Susan Queirolo	360.618.6266	Darrington	Val Cook	360.436.2150
Edmonds	Debbie Rothfus	425.431.7555	Everett	Laurie Cwikla	425.385.5264
Granite Falls	Nancie Wilder	360.283.4311	Index	Linda Tate	360.793.1330
Lake Stevens	Janet Rich	425.335.1520	Lakewood	Jim Roan	360.652.4501 x3029
Marysville	Cathy Fridrich	360.653.0825	Monroe	Heidi Dalton	360.804.2600
Mukilteo	Belinda Kelly	425.356.1204	Northshore	Shelly Fields	425.408.5594
Snohomish	Marian Sherwood	360.563.7310	Stanwood	Lynn Currey	360.629.1250
Sultan	Cyd Leahy	360.793-9801 x125			

WASHINGTON STATE SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCES

- WithinReach Family Health Hotline 1-800-322-2588, 1-800-833-6388 TTD
<http://www.parenthelp123.org/>
- WA Speech and Language therapists <http://www.stutteringhelp.org/sfupload/referrals/Washington>
- Camps and intensive clinics <http://www.stutteringhelp.org/clinics-intensive>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

- The Stuttering Foundation Risk Factors for Stuttering www.stutteringhelp.org
www.stutteringhelp.org/risk-factors
- The Lidcombe Program <http://www.stuttering-answers.com/Lidcombe-Program-for-Childhood-Stuttering.html>
- Healthychildren.org (from the American Academy of Pediatrics) <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/Pages/Stuttering-in-Toddlers-Preschoolers.aspx>
- CDC Act Early www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html



**Snohomish County
Early Intervention
Program**



**SNOHOMISH
HEALTH DISTRICT**
WWW.SNOHD.ORG

