



# NATIONAL STUTTERING ASSOCIATION

## CHANGING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WHO STUTTER

### CHILDHOOD STUTTERING: THE PEDIATRICIANS' ROLE

**WHAT IS STUTTERING?** Stuttering is a communication disorder that typically emerges between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. It is characterized by disruptions, or “speech disfluencies” in the forward flow of speech. These disfluencies can be accompanied by physical tension or struggle as a speaker attempts to produce sounds and words.

**CAUSES OF STUTTERING** Stuttering is a complex disorder with multiple causes and cannot be merely attributed to talking too fast nor feeling nervous. Developmental stuttering is neurological, not psychological in origin; affecting areas of the brain responsible for speech and language. Stuttering may present in isolation or with other speech and language disorders.



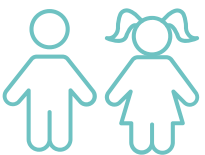
**ADVISING CAREGIVERS:** Misconceptions about stuttering are prevalent, and as a result, parents and caregivers frequently feel responsible for their child’s stuttering. It is crucial for physicians to convey to caregivers that they are not to blame and to emphasize the available options to support children who stutter and their families.



**SPEECH THERAPY FOR CHILDREN:** For young children, speech therapy includes supporting the child and their family in managing the stuttering and preventing negative emotional responses. For older children and adolescents, treatment addresses the physical aspects of speech production as well as reducing negative reactions to stuttering.



**EARLY IDENTIFICATION:** Guidance regarding when to refer to a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) can be found in an evidence-based screener such as the **Childhood Stuttering Screening for Physicians (CSS-P)**, which identifies children at risk of persistent stuttering and indicates if a child should be monitored or referred to an SLP for a stuttering evaluation. Relying on observation of a child stuttering is not indicative of stuttering severity or whether therapeutic intervention is warranted. The CSS-P screening tool is available at [www.CSS-P.com](http://www.CSS-P.com).



**EARLY INTERVENTION:** Up to 75% of preschool children who stutter recover naturally, leading some physicians to adopt a wait-and-see approach before recommending therapy. Identifying children at risk of persistent stuttering and having them be seen by an SLP can reduce the challenges associated with stuttering. Identifying and implementing a treatment plan early can reduce the risk of negative emotional reactions and worsening of the condition.

SLPs certified by the American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association (ASHA) diagnose and treat stuttering. To find an SLP in your area, including those specialized in treating youth, contact the NSA at [info@WeStutter.org](mailto:info@WeStutter.org) or (800) 937-8888.

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