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Stuttering

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Synonyms

[Disfluency](#)

Definition

Stuttering is a speech disorder in which the flow of speech is disrupted by involuntary repetitions (e.g., a-a-a-apple) and prolongations of sounds (e.g., Ssssit down), syllables (e.g., pat-pat-patriotic), words, or phrases; involuntary fillers (e.g., “um,” “like”); or silent pauses in which the speaker is unable to produce sounds. Stuttering can be variable in certain situations depending on the anxiety level connected with that activity. Although the precise etiology is not known, both genetics and neurophysiology are thought to contribute. Speech therapy is the primary treatment. It generally aims to increase fluency or modify the stuttering behaviors.

Stuttering typically begins during childhood – approximately 2.5% of children under the age of 5 stutter. It can last throughout the lifetime, although approximately 75% of individuals who begin stuttering during the preschool years recover by their early teens. The overall prevalence of stuttering is approximately 1% of the population. If severe and persistent, it can significantly impact academic, social, and vocational outcomes. Differential diagnosis is required to distinguish between word retrieval and language formulation difficulties which can also cause disfluent speech.

See Also

- ▶ [Fluency and Fluency Disorders](#)
- ▶ [Speech Therapy](#)

References and Readings

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- American Speech-Language Hearing Association. (2017, March 29). *Stuttering*. Retrieved 17 Mar 2017 from <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/stuttering.htm>