

Stuttering, also known as stammering, is a speech disorder in which the flow of speech is disrupted by involuntary repetitions and prolongations of sounds, syllables, words or phrases as well as involuntary silent pauses or blocks in which the person who stutters is unable to produce sounds. The term stuttering is most commonly associated with involuntary sound repetition, but it also encompasses the abnormal hesitation or pausing before speech, referred to by people who stutter as blocks, and the prolongation of certain sounds, usually vowels or semivowels. For many people who stutter, repetition is the main problem. The term "stuttering" covers a wide range of severity, encompassing barely perceptible impediments that are largely cosmetic to severe symptoms that effectively prevent oral communication. In the world, approximately four times as many men as women stutter, encompassing 70 million people worldwide, or about 1% of the world's population.

The impact of stuttering on a person's functioning and emotional state can be severe. This may include fears of having to enunciate specific vowels or consonants, fears of being caught stuttering in social situations, self-imposed isolation, anxiety, stress, shame, low self-esteem, being a possible target of bullying, having to use word substitution and rearrange words in a sentence to hide stuttering, or a feeling of "loss of control" during speech. Stuttering is sometimes popularly seen as a symptom of anxiety, but there is actually no direct correlation in that direction.

Stuttering is generally not a problem with the physical production of speech sounds or putting thoughts into words. Acute nervousness and stress are not thought to cause stuttering, but they can trigger stuttering in people who have the speech disorder, and living with a stigmatized disability can result in anxiety and high allostatic stress load (chronic nervousness and stress) that reduce the amount of acute stress necessary to trigger stuttering in any given person who stutters, worsening the problem in the manner of a positive feedback system; the name 'stuttered speech syndrome' has been proposed for this condition. Neither acute nor chronic stress, however, itself creates any predisposition to stuttering.

Stutterers often find that their stuttering fluctuates and that they have "good" days, "bad" days and "stutter-free" days. The times in which their stuttering fluctuates can be random. Although the exact etiology, or cause, of stuttering is unknown, both genetics and neurophysiology are thought to contribute. There are many treatments and speech therapy techniques available that may help decrease speech disfluency in some people who stutter to the point where an untrained ear cannot identify a problem; however, there is essentially no cure for the disorder at present. The severity of the person's stuttering would correspond to the amount of speech therapy needed to decrease disfluency. For severe stuttering, long-term therapy and hard work is required to decrease disfluency.

Adapted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stuttering>