



I STAMMER.

Stammering and  
healthcare

# WHAT IS STAMMERING

- A neurologically-based speech difference
- Intermittently physically hard to speak
- Someone who stammers may repeat, prolong or get stuck on sounds or words
- Might also be signs of physical effort as the person works to get a word out
- Might be circumlocution as the person works to find alternative words or phrases

Some people mask their stammering so it may be less visible, but there is likely to be a lot of work 'under the surface' to maintain the impression of fluency.

STAMM A



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# IS THERE A CURE?

- No. It sometimes reduces or disappears over time.
- Techniques to control speech fluency are a bit 'marmite'. There are some apps that can be helpful. Again, not for everyone.
- Accepting stammering and finding ways to live well with it can be very helpful for some.
- Modern therapy approaches focus on confident communication.
- The best cure is for organisations to make space for stammering.

# ON THE TELEPHONE

“They told me that they couldn’t hear me properly because of the signal from my phone but it wasn’t my phone, it was me stammering.”

“There’s usually a queue on the phone waiting to be answered which just increases the anxiety whilst waiting for my turn in the queue going over and over in my mind what I need to say.”

“I was really struggling on the phone, like the kind of block where you're not even saying anything. The person just hung up on me.”

“They cut me off several times, clearly frustrated by my pauses and repetitions. I felt rushed, as though I was an inconvenience.”

“Things took a turn for the worse when I heard laughter at the other end. I was crushed. The humiliation was unbearable, and I hung up.”

# TIME PRESSURE

“I struggled to tell them why I was there and what my name was. Then they asked which medication I was after and I didn’t get past the first syllable before they finished the word for me. In the end, they didn’t even have my prescription so I went through all that for nothing. I cried when I got home.”

# MOCKERY

"I gave my name so they could get my prescription. They asked my address and I stuttered on the number two. The staff member repeated "tur tur two", laughing at me. I've lived with a stutter for over 50 years and I thought I had left this sort of mocking long behind me."

"I asked the senior nurse which bay my wife was in and stammered. She burst out laughing..."

# MISINTERPRETED AS LYING

“They refused to speak to me about my own medical condition as I was ‘being hesitant’ when giving my date of birth so they believed I wasn’t the patient.”

“They thought I was trying to impersonate somebody else because I couldn’t share my details fast enough. So I didn’t get my medication.”



# **STAMMERING MISINTERPRETED WITHIN DIAGNOSIS**

“I have had a prescription for a controlled drug for the past 5 years. Every year I have to have a review and this year the pharmacist has added a note to my prescription saying ‘speech was slow, CHECK BEFORE ISSUING’. I am now worried that I will lose access to a prescription that I need due to worries that I am abusing the drug.”





# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

# RECOMMENDATION #1

## TALKING WITH PATIENTS

1. Introduce a routine for dealing with 'silent calls' or 'a bad line' (see our *Patient Contact Guide* for an outline)
2. Allow patients to take their time. Rushing patients who stammer tends to make it harder for them to speak.
3. Allow patients to finish their sentences at their own pace.
4. Don't mistake stammering for something else. For someone who stammers, stammering, pausing or changing words doesn't indicate nervousness, an attempt to avoid a question or the side effects of a drug.

# RECOMMENDATION #2 **FLAGS**

Opt-in flagging system for patient records, so that you know that your patient stammers before your interaction starts.

# RECOMMENDATION #3

## FLEXIBLE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Make sure there's more than one way to book an appointment or engage with your department.

Let patients choose the channel through which they can communicate with you effectively.

# RECOMMENDATION #4

## REMINDERS IN A BUSY ENVIRONMENT

I  
STAMMER

Reg. charity nos. 1069996/7/SC038866

I haven't forgotten my **name** or my **address**.  
I stammer, it's how I talk. Give me time.  
Find out more at [stamma.org](http://stamma.org).

STAMMA

# RESOURCES

- STAMMA's [\*Patient Contact Guide\*](#)
- Webpage [\*In Conversation with Someone who Stammers\*](#)
- [Affiliation](#) for staff across your organisation to access a range of workshops
- Employment Support Service if your role brings you into contact with patients who stammer:

**[employmentsupport@stamma.org](mailto:employmentsupport@stamma.org)**

or call the helpline on **0808 802 0002**  
and ask for someone from employment support  
to call you back





## WHAT DOES STAMMA OFFER?

- Support, information, workshops, groups and community for **people who stammer**
- Support, information, workshops and groups for **parents**
- Support groups for **children** who stammer
- Support and guidance for **employers and organisations**
- Specialist **guidance on reasonable adjustments**
- **Impact reviews** of procedures including recommendations on making your business more inclusive for staff, service users and customers who stammer



# HERE TO SUPPORT



## HELPLINE

Call **free** on 0808 802 0002



## WEBCHAT

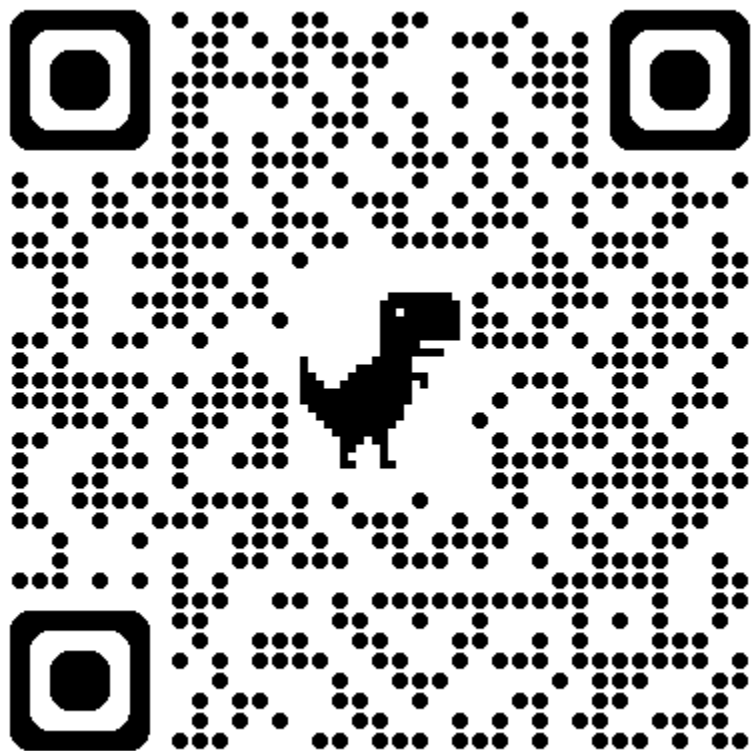
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