



however, outgrow this phase as they expand their vocabulary and sharpen their communication skills. Less than one percent of children continue to stutter as adults. Explains Dr Geeta Mukundan, head of Department of Speech Pathology, All Yash Jung National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped, "Stuttering can sometimes appear in a school-going child following the birth of a sibling, change of school or death of a parent/grandparent. In such a case it could be because of a neurological problem or traumatic experience."

#### How is stuttering diagnosed and treated?

Stuttering can be diagnosed and treated by speech evaluation in a child who continues to stutter beyond five years of age. Though speech therapy aims at improving fluency in communication, there is at present no cure for stuttering. Avoid working with anyone who promises a "cure". The programs often address the psychological side effects of stuttering also. The speech pathologist discusses different speaking situations that the patient faces and ways of handling them. For example, it is alright to tell a stranger that you stutter and may take a longer time to complete a sentence. This reduces the pressure of speaking and makes it easier to use slow relaxed speech.

The writer is a voco-arts medicine specialist & communication consultant

## K-K-K-K-Kiran...

### By Dr Sadhana Nayak

K-K-K-Kiran... stuttered Shekhar Khan in the film. Gory and shock into insight. However in reality, those who stutter or stammer tend to avoid situations that draw attention to them. And yet, many like Winston Churchill, Hollywood stars Julia Roberts and Bruce Willis and our very own Hindi film heroes who stutter have been in the public eye.

#### What is stuttering?

Stuttering is a disorder of speech fluency. A person who stutters often repeats speech sounds (r-r-r-rabbit), syllables (j-j-j-j-jitter), parts of words (b-b-b-b-birthday), whole words, phrases or stretches sounds (r---at). He may sometimes be unable to start a word or may produce no sound between words. The stuttering may be accompanied by blinking of the eyes, foot tapping, tremors or muscle tension in the lips, jaw, tongue, face or upper body. A person who stutters may be quite fluent while sleeping or conversing with a friend or spouse, but his stuttering may increase while speaking before a group, ordering a meal at a restaurant or speaking on the telephone.

#### What causes stuttering?

The exact cause of stuttering is still not known. Possible causes are genetic or hereditary (stuttering has been seen in families/ twins) or neurogenic factors like signal problems between the brain and nerves. Says Dr Geeta Gore, head of the Department of Audiology and Speech Therapy, Nal Hospital, Mumbai, "Environmental factors like stress, peer pressure or even having a friend or relative who stutters can contribute to stuttering." Contrary to popular perception, psychological problems such as lack of confidence usually result from stuttering and are not its cause.

Developmental stuttering, which is normal non-fluency, can occur in children between the ages of two and five, when they are developing their speech and language skills. Most children,



#### Dealing with a child who stutters

- Avoid criticizing the child's speech and punishing him for inefficiencies. Do not compel him/her to repeat stuttered words.
- Avoid encouraging the child to perform verbally for people.
- Listen attentively to the child when he/she speaks. Do not interrupt, fill in words or complete the child's sentences.
- Speak slowly and in a relaxed manner. The child will learn to do the same. Do not give suggestions like slow down, relax.

#### For more information contact:

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