***Stuttering***

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When we talk, sounds are made by the muscles in our throat, mouth, and lips, and our brain helps us do this. Sometimes, people may have trouble speaking clearly, which is called stuttering, or "thikkuvai" in Tamil.

Stuttering usually starts when children are between 2 and 6 years old. They might repeat sounds or words, like saying “m-m-m-mom.” They may take a long time to say a word or get stuck trying to say it. Sometimes, they feel frustrated or embarrassed when talking.

For example, they might say “a-a-a-amma” or make sounds like “ssssss” while trying to think of the right word. Some may blink their eyes quickly or move their lips a lot while speaking.

If you know someone who stutters, it’s important to be patient. Let them take their time when talking, and don’t interrupt them. This will help them feel more comfortable and confident.

Stuttering can happen for several reasons:

1. It might start in childhood. It can also change in the future.

2. Feelings like sadness or low confidence can cause it as they grow up.

3. It can also happen because of nervous system problems due to accidents.

Research shows that stuttering can run in families. Some studies have found changes in certain genes (such as GNPTAB, GNPTG, NAGPA and AP4E1) might be related to stuttering.

Sometimes, a stressful environment can make stuttering worse. Kids who stutter might feel more comfortable when they are in calm situations. It’s also important to know that stuttering doesn’t mean someone is scared; many children who stutter are brave!

Every year on October 22, we celebrate International Stuttering Awareness Day. Famous people like Hrithik Roshan and Rowan Atkinson (famous as Mr. Bean) have also dealt with stuttering.

Children and adults who stutter may be helped by treatments such as speech therapy, or a form of therapy called cognitive behavioral therapy. Since stuttering disrupts the normal flow of speech, electronic devices to improve speech fluency can also be used.

If you have a friend who stutters, encourage them to talk naturally. Give them time to express themselves without stress. This will help them communicate better and feel good about themselves!