

# Long COVID: Stammering

(Or changes to the  
flow of your speech)

In everyday life, speech is often interrupted by pauses, such as “um” / “ah” / “er” and slips of the tongue where one sound or word comes out as another, especially if we are talking rapidly, feeling self-aware or worried, are distracted, tired or trying to think quickly.

Some people experience a change in the fluency of their speech post COVID-19. This may be due to one or more underlying symptoms such as breathlessness, brain fog, stress and anxiety. For example you may find that word finding difficulties can interrupt the flow of your speech. Or it may feel like you don't have control over the flow without any obvious cause.

If you have noticed changes to the flow of your speech and you are concerned, consider seeking advice from your GP or local speech and language therapy services.



## You may notice some of the following:

- new stammering or the return of childhood speech difficulties
- slow speech
- finding it an effort to speak
- facial grimacing or tightening trying to get words out
- changes to the rhythm of speech
- repeating words or parts of words and sentences
- words blocking when you speak (you may go to make a sound but feel like the word won't come out)

## Here are some things that could help:



**Reduce stress and anxiety** as this may be having an impact on your speech.



**Slow down your rate of speech:** Give yourself time to plan and process what you would like to say.



**Ensure you have adequate breath support:** Avoid pushing through to the end of the sentence. If you are running out of air, stop and take a top up breath. If you have new onset breathlessness then this may disrupt your speech. It may be something you need to practise; incorporating breath into your speech.



**Write things down:** You may find that you can read something out loud more fluently than speaking spontaneously, for example when presenting something.



**Try to focus on the times where speech goes well** rather than only focusing on when it doesn't.



**Try to plan your most important speech activities for when you are well rested.** You may find it easier to speak when you are less fatigued. If you have important phone calls to make, or special conversations planned, try to time them for when you are least tired.



**Disclosure:** Some people find it helpful to explain to others why they may be having some speech difficulties, rather than trying to hide them which can sometimes make communication worse.

## Further Resources

For support with breathlessness:

- Ask your GP about respiratory physiotherapy
- Visit [www.eno.org/breathe](http://www.eno.org/breathe)