

# Selective Mutism in Children

## What is Selective Mutism?

- Selective mutism is a complex anxiety disorder seen in childhood that is characterized by a child's inability to communicate or speak effectively in particular social settings, like school or other activities.
- More than 90% of children suffering with selective mutism also have a social phobia or social anxiety. Selective mutism is therefore the fear of speaking or communicating, and can be quite debilitating for the child.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Selective Mutism?

- Severe anxiety is shown to be a precursor to selective mutism. It is also heavily genetically-influenced.
- They show severe behavioral inhibition and an inability to speak in social settings
- Common symptoms include: sensory processing difficulties, developmental delays, picky eating habits, and difficulty with self-regulation.

## Treatments

- Treatment should seek to lower anxiety, increase self-esteem, and increase confidence and social communication. The leading treatment for selective mutism is **Social Communication Anxiety Therapy (SCAT)** because of its holistic emphasis and team-based design.
- Cognitive Behavioral therapy (**CBT**), play therapy, and medication are also helpful in treating selective mutism.