

# A Parent/Carer Guide to Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)

#### What is ARFID?

Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) is an eating disorder where a child eats only a very limited range of foods. Unlike other eating disorders, ARFID is not related to body image concerns. Instead, it may be due to sensory characteristics, fear of negative consequences from eating, or a lack of interest in eating.

## **Key Signs and Symptoms**

- Limited Variety of Foods: Only eating a narrow range of foods, often avoiding entire food groups.
- **Sensory Sensitivities:** Aversion to certain textures, colors, or smells of foods.
- Fear of Eating: Concern about choking, vomiting, or other negative experiences with food.
- **Poor Growth:** Noticeable weight loss, difficulty maintaining a healthy weight, or inadequate growth for their age.
- **Nutritional Deficiencies:** Lack of essential nutrients leading to fatigue, poor concentration, or other health issues.
- **Social Impact:** Difficulty eating with others, avoiding social situations involving food.

#### **Possible Causes**

- **Sensory Sensitivities**: Children with heightened sensitivity to the taste, texture, or smell of foods.
- **Traumatic Experience:** Negative experiences like choking or severe vomiting associated with food.
- **Developmental Disorders:** Common in children with autism or other neurodevelopmental conditions.





## When to Seek Help

- Growth Concerns: Noticeable weight loss or poor growth.
- **Health Issues:** Signs of nutritional deficiencies like fatigue or frequent illness.
- Impact on Daily Life: Eating habits interfering with school, social activities, or family meals.
- **Distress**: Significant anxiety or distress related to food and eating.





### Supporting Your Child at Home

- Create a Positive Mealtime Environment: Keep mealtimes stressfree and positive.
- Offer a Variety of Foods: Encourage trying new foods without pressure.
- Be Patient: Change takes time; celebrate small successes.
- Seek Professional Help: Don't hesitate to reach out to healthcare professionals for guidance and support.
- Research advice and guidance: Continue to develop your own understanding of managing the condition and implement strategies that create a positive and supportive eating environment.
- Books and Media: Look for age-appropriate resources on 'ARFID for children' for your child to better understand the condition.

Remember, early intervention can make a significant difference in helping your child overcome ARFID and develop a healthy relationship with food. If you have concerns about your child's eating habits, seek professional guidance to ensure they receive the appropriate care and support.