

# Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) Parents/Carers Help Leaflet

This leaflet has been produced by Yorkshire and the Humber Clinical Network, in collaboration with parents and carers of young people with ARFID, to gather the best tips and insights into helping families of young people with ARFID.

## No pressure approach to eating



Don't put pressure or force your child to try and eat foods they don't feel comfortable with, this could make things worse.

Any food is better than no food. While nutrition is important for many ARFID children, eating any food is better than eating no food.

## Have safe foods available/stocked up

An ARFID sufferer will not eat if preferred foods are not available. Listen to your child, you know them best. Recognise that they need to feel safe around food and their perceived fussiness with food/environment is not bad behaviour but rather a need to feel safe and in control. Consider leaving new food around outside of mealtimes (where possible), with no pressure, no mention of it and often on the table on a separate plate at mealtimes (sensory permitting). This could help to stop preferred foods becoming over-eaten and 'boring' without pressure, and increases the feeling of control.



## Consider the sensory needs of your child at mealtimes



Think about your child's sensory needs around food and try and eliminate issues if possible.

**Consider noises:** even things like other people chewing, plates clattering, humming fridges or ticking clocks can be off-putting.

**Smells:** Cooking or smells from other people's food can cause nausea.

**Sensory strategies** can help with emotional regulation e.g. weighted blankets, headphones or having feet touching the floor/on a skateboard.

If possible, have a 'learning plate' in front of your child and serve a small amount of food on this plate. There is no pressure for them to eat this food, but they can look /smell /touch /play with this food.

Speak to your child's school about making adaptations for your child at mealtimes, Dietitians can support with this. See the [ARFID Awareness UK Schools Resource leaflet](#) for more details.

# ARFID Parents/Carers Help Leaflet

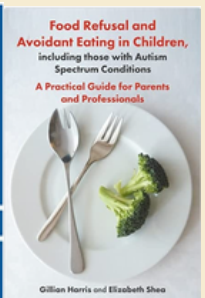
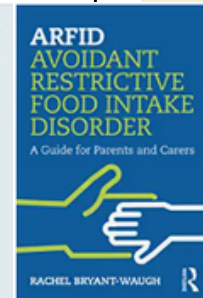
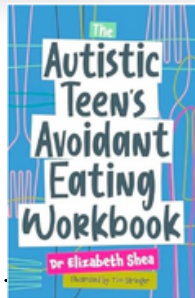


## Look after yourself

ARFID is not caused by parents or the child being deliberately 'naughty'. There are likely to be multiple interacting factors. It is important to look after your own wellbeing to ensure you are able to provide support for your child. See Peer Support Groups (below) for groups of other parents/carers going through something similar. The support and understanding from someone in a similar situation can be reassuring.

## ARFID Books and Websites to Access Help

- ★ [Endeavour - ARFID carer support group](#)
- ★ [ARFID Awareness UK](#)
- ★ [Twinkl ARFID information](#)
- ★ [Feeding Matters](#)



## Peer Support Groups



- ★ [ARFID Parent/Carer Facebook Peer Support Group](#)
- ★ [Beat: Hummingbird Online ARFID Support Group](#)
- ★ [Beat: Endeavour - ARFID carer support group](#)
- ★ [Owl Blue ARFID Friends Facebook Support Group](#)
- ★ Your local parent/carer forums may have an ARFID support group e.g. Teesside ARFID parent/carer support group

## Things to consider

- ★ If you're worried about your child's amount of / range of food eaten see your GP and ask for a referral to a dietitian for an assessment to check for vitamin, mineral, and/or nutritional deficiencies.
- ★ Speak to your GP about checking your child's blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, all are key indicators if there is a cause for concern.
- ★ Ask your Dietitian/GP to monitor your child's height and weight to ensure continued growth.



With special thanks to the following for their input into the leaflet content: Parents and carers of young people with ARFID who responded to the YHCN survey Yorkshire and the Humber Clinical Network's Eating Disorders Clinical Associate