

WE ARE ARFID WARRIORS

ARFID INFORMATION SHEET

What does ARFID mean?

ARFID stands for Avoidant / Restrictive Food Intake Disorder.

It is a pattern of eating usually present from about the age of 2, and occurs for a variety of reasons.

What does ARFID look like?

Your child may show some (but not necessarily all) of the following:

- Eating a very restricted range of foods (selective eating)
- Rarely appearing to be hungry or asking for food
- Avoiding / refusing to sit down for meals or needing distraction (e.g. TV) to eat
- Turning away, pushing the spoon away etc.
- Anxiety/disgust e.g. gagging or vomiting at the sight / smell / taste of food
- Eating very small amounts
- Refusing to self-feed
- Spitting out food
- Crying / screaming at mealtimes
- High anxiety over new foods
- Difficulty in eating in a range of settings e.g. will only eat at one particular restaurant, will not eat food on holiday, eats certain foods at home and others at school
- Negotiating and/or using distraction techniques to avoid eating

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Parents of children with ARFID can get extremely worried about their child's eating and often report that mealtimes have become a battle.

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On a day to day basis, you may find:

- Your child might only eat specific brands of food (e.g. only eating McCain oven chips and rejecting all other chips)
- Foods have to look 'right' (including being in the right packaging), be the right texture, temperature, and smell and taste okay before they are accepted. Some children need foods to be 'perfect' e.g. only evenly golden oven chips, no broken biscuits.
- Foods may be chosen based on how they feel inside the mouth e.g. dry, crunchy foods (biscuits, cereal) and/or soft and smooth foods that either melt or dissolve in the mouth, e.g. fromage frais or chocolate.

Some children with ARFID are over or underweight, but many are not. A child with ARFID may be lacking in essential vitamins and minerals.

How is ARFID different from 'fussy / picky eating'?

Most toddlers go through a stage when they reject new or unfamiliar foods. Children usually grow out of this stage and learn from watching others which foods are safe and ok to eat. Children with ARFID get stuck in this stage and their difficulties with eating interfere with everyday family life.