

# Is It ARFID?

A Parent's Checklist for Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder

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Check each item that applies to your child. These indicators help distinguish ARFID from typical picky eating. No single item is diagnostic on its own.

- Shrinking food list.** The number of accepted foods is decreasing over time rather than expanding. Foods that were once acceptable are being dropped.

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- Fewer than 10-15 accepted foods.** The total variety of foods your child will eat is extremely limited, often restricted to specific brands, preparations, or temperatures.

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- Intense sensory reactions.** Your child gags, retches, or shows visible distress when encountering certain textures, smells, or appearances of food. This is consistent and predictable, not occasional.

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- Nutritional deficiencies.** Bloodwork shows low iron, zinc, B12, vitamin D, or other deficiencies. Your pediatrician has expressed concern about nutritional adequacy.

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- Weight or growth concerns.** Your child is not gaining weight appropriately for their age, has fallen off their growth curve, or has experienced unexplained weight loss.

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- Mealtime distress beyond preference.** Meals involve anxiety, crying, shutdown, or conflict that goes beyond "I don't want broccoli." The emotional intensity is disproportionate to the situation.

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- Social avoidance around food.** Your child avoids birthday parties, school lunches, sleepovers, or family gatherings because of food-related anxiety.

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- History of a triggering event.** A choking episode, vomiting incident, allergic reaction, or food poisoning was followed by a sudden, lasting increase in food restriction.

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- Reliance on supplements or liquid nutrition.** Your child depends on nutritional shakes, vitamins, or supplements to meet basic nutritional needs because their diet is too limited.

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- Functional impairment.** Food restriction is affecting your child's ability to attend school, maintain friendships, participate in activities, or function in daily life.

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## Scoring Guide

**0-2 items:** Likely within the range of typical selective eating. Monitor and revisit if patterns worsen.

**3-4 items:** Some concern. Consider a screening conversation with a clinician familiar with ARFID.

**5+ items:** Strong indicators of ARFID. A formal clinical evaluation is recommended.

## When choosing a clinician, ask:

1. Do you have specific experience treating ARFID (not just anorexia)?
2. What assessment tools do you use for ARFID screening?
3. What does your treatment approach look like for food avoidance?
4. Do you use CBT-AR or exposure-based approaches?

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This checklist is for informational purposes and does not constitute a diagnosis. Consult a qualified clinician for evaluation.