

First Steps ED is a leading eating disorder charity providing **hope, opportunities, and choices** to lives affected by eating difficulties and disorders.

What is Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)?

Avoidant **R**estrictive **F**ood **I**ntake **D**isorder, more commonly known as **ARFID**, is difficult for many people and has only become a diagnosable disorder in recent years. It is a condition characterised by individuals who avoid certain foods or food groups either entirely or is restricted in quantity (eating small amounts).

Different to other restrictive eating disorders, ARFID is not affected by poor body image issues or for the purpose of losing weight. Also, it doesn't always feature other behaviours usually associated with anorexia, bulimia, BED or OSFED (such as over-exercising).

Sufferers have often been dismissed as 'picky eaters' but it can be so much more challenging than that. Some have sensory issues, aversions to certain tastes and textures, not recognising hunger cues or lack of interest in eating.

Anyone of any age can have ARFID.



ARFID can occur in children, teenagers and adults which is why our support is open to all ages, with both options for adults as well as children and young people who are struggling.

Our research-informed four-week ARFID support group is peer-led, developed by staff and volunteers with first-hand experience. We'll look at the symptoms, it's impact, as well as distractions, coping strategies and setting personal goals.

● Introduction & Information

During our introductory session we'll get to know each other. We'll explore the nature of ARFID, the causes, symptoms and triggers. Before we finish, we'll have a think about our goals, what we want to tackle and how.

● Unpacking (Understanding the impact)

This week we'll discuss how ARFID impacts our lives. We think about relationships, social lives, health, body image and how it affects us day-to-day.

● Advice & Support

Time to look at some coping strategies, positive distractions and learning how to manage triggering or difficult situations. We will also explore communication and how we can talk about key feelings and emotions to loved ones and peers.

● Reflection & Goal Setting

Reflecting on everything we have learned and covered will be the aim of our final session as we look back at our goals and ahead to our next steps in recovery.

Essential intervention. Offering a lifeline to individuals in recovery.



Skills for families and carers

The First Steps ED 'Skills for Carers' is a four-week workshop. Each weekly session is full of practical tips, scenarios and case studies, designed to help carers develop self-reflective, care-giving skills to role model confidence, compassion and courage.

This series is essential and can be a lifeline for parents and carers involved in the care and support of someone with poor body image, eating difficulties or an eating disorder. Through a coordinated approach, each workshop equips attendees with the knowledge and tools needed to support and encourage their loved one, whether it be for early intervention, prevention or support through recovery. It can also be beneficial to meet a community of other carers who no longer feel alone in their support role.

Our experienced facilitators use an evidence-based approach, personal experience, and practical skills to engage and advise attendees and discuss difficult situations which might arise as a parent or carer.

Support is available with or without diagnosis. If you need advice or support, we're here to help. Referrals can be made by the young person, a parent/ carer, or healthcare professional. [Click here to get started.](#)

01332 367571 | info@firststepsed.co.uk | www.firststepsed.co.uk

Spot the signs:

Someone might be avoiding and/or restricting their intake for a number of different reasons, which means that ARFID presentations can differ in one person to the next. Because of this, there is a wide range of possible signs and symptoms. Possible signs include:

- Difficulty recognising when hungry.
- Always having the same meals.
- Appearing to be a "picky eater".
- Only eating similar foods (e.g. only beige coloured foods).
- Weight loss, or not gaining weight as expected in children.
- Sensitivity to certain textures, smells, etc.
- Finding eating and mealtimes a 'chore'.
- Eating a reasonably varied diet, but still eating less food than is needed.
- Anxiety at mealtimes (small sips/bites, slow chewing, observing others, etc.)
- Missing meals due to being busy with other things.
- Attempts to avoid social situations around food.
- Struggling to eat more than a few mouthfuls.
- Needing to take supplements to ensure nutritional needs are met.

Our 'Skills for Carers' workshops based on the New Maudsley approach and supported by Professor Janet Treasure (author of Skills-based Caring for a Loved One with an Eating Disorder: The new Maudsley method.)

Our ARFID support group is also strengthened and supported by Lottie Elson, PHD student at University of Derby who is currently studying "Investigations of the relationship between attentional bias, affect and disordered eating in children, and preventative intervention exploration."

