

ABUHB ARFID

(Avoidant and Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) Service Food Chaining

Information for families

If you are given this information by a professional it does not necessarily mean that your child has a diagnosis of ARFID. All children will benefit from these strategies.

What is chaining?

Chaining is a way of taking your child's safe foods and slowly introducing them to similar foods so that they can start to increase their variety. It increases the number of foods that your child eats by finding out what it is about their safe foods that they like (e.g., is it the taste, the texture, the smell?).

- Once you know what your child likes about their safe foods, you can identify the foods they are most likely to try that are similar to their safe foods.
- The goal is to create "chains" between the food that they already eat and new foods that would support their growth, health and nutrition.
- New foods will be similar taste, colour or texture.
- Keep the steps very small and link the new food to the existing safe food as much as possible. E.g. change the shape of their sandwiches from square to triangles.
- All food chaining should be done with your child's knowledge and consent. This is important as it helps your child to know what to expect and maintain trust in you as their support through chaining.
- Food chaining needs to be done slowly with the time-frame agreed by your child.
- If your child does not want to move past a particular safe food e.g. chips, then try focusing on another food chain e.g. apple.
- If your child refuses a food, try not to comment or make a fuss, simply offer this food again another day.

Identifying food characteristics

Everyone likes different foods, so food chains will look different for each person. By working through these steps together with your child, you can begin to build food chains that fit with your child's likes and dislikes to help them increase the variety of foods they accept.

Step 1: My favourite foods are...

(Example – plain pasta, boiled rice, crackers, chicken nuggets, chips, marmite on toast...)

Step 2: My favourite food **colours** are...

(Example – beige, white, yellow, brown...)

I like **textures** that are...

(Example – soft and smooth, dry and crunchy...)

I like **flavours** that are...

(Example – salty, savoury, garlic/ herbs, marmite...)

I like **smells** that are...

(Example – savoury, garlic...)

Step 3: Make a list of the things your child likes about their safe foods...

(Example – plain cooked carbohydrates, dry crunchy snacks, processed meats...)

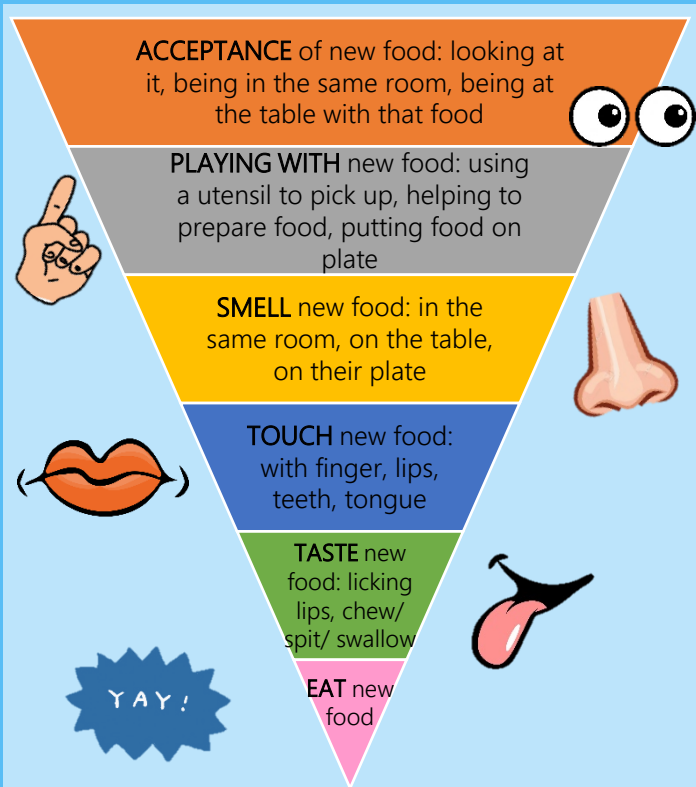
Step 4: Make a list of new foods to introduce that share some of these qualities...

Example list

1. Rice > couscous or cauliflower rice
2. Chicken nuggets > chicken kiev or fish
3. Sausages > chicken sausages
4. Crisps > vegetable or fruit crisps
5. Dry shreddies > dry shredded wheat
6. Chip shop chips > shop-bought chips

Step 5: choose a food chain to start with, and work through the steps on the pyramid below.

Hierarchy of chaining process



The idea of introducing a new food can be really scary, which is why it can be helpful to introduce and build up acceptance of a new food before going straight to eating it.

The above model breaks down the stages into **accepting, playing with, smelling, touching, tasting**, and finally **eating** the new food. These stages allow for minimal pressure while being around the new food that should see anxiety slowly reduce, making eventually trying the new food seem much less scary for the child.

Being around a new food without eating it can include **messy food play**, details of which can be found in a separate resource produced by our team.

(Adapted from Toomey, K. (2002). Preventing and Treating "Food Jags." The Journal of Paediatric Nutrition and Development, 100, 2-6)

Examples of successful chaining

Below are a few examples of food chains using the sensory stages to reduce anxieties, reach acceptance of, and build up to eating the new food.

Goal:

Chicken nuggets > piece of fish

Food chain

Chicken nuggets > home-made nuggets > home-made chicken goujons > home-made breaded fish goujons > lightly breaded piece of fish

Goal:

Sausages > chicken sausages

Food chain

Favourite pork sausages > different branded pork sausage > different shaped pork sausage > chicken sausage

Goal:

Plain boiled rice > couscous with herbs

Food chain

Plain boiled long-grain rice > different type of plain boiled rice > plain couscous > couscous with herbs

For each of these chain stages, start off with **accepting, playing with**, smelling, touching, and tasting the new food before progressing to eating it. For example, allowing your child to interact with home-made nuggets before smelling and touching, and eventually attempting to eat one.



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