

Food Chaining for ARFID: Steps to Introducing New Foods or Fear Foods

Before Getting Started...

Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your nutritionist:

- What are three of your favorite foods? Why?
- What are three foods that you really dislike? Why?
- How do you feel about trying new or unfamiliar foods?

What are Fear Foods?

Fear foods are foods that you avoid eating or eat very little of because you don't like certain characteristics of a food (ex. taste, texture, color) or because you have a negative memory of a food. The idea of eating a fear food can make you feel nervous, uncomfortable, or anxious.

What is Food Chaining?

Food chaining is one strategy that can help teens try new foods or fear foods by considering their unique food and taste preferences. The goal is to create “chains” or links between foods that you already eat and new foods that would support your growth and health. New foods are similar in taste or texture to foods that you already like to eat and are introduced gradually and regularly. Here are a few examples of food chains:

Favorite food: Chicken nuggets

New food: Fish

Food Chain: Store-bought chicken nuggets → Home-made breaded chicken → Home-made breaded fish sticks → Lightly-breaded baked cod



Favorite food: Kraft mac n' cheese

New food: Broccoli

Food Chain: Kraft mac n' cheese → Pasta with melted cheddar cheese and broccoli florets (gradually decrease pasta) → Steamed broccoli with melted cheddar cheese → Steamed broccoli



Favorite food: Orange juice

New food: Milk

Food Chain: Orange juice → Smoothie (Ice, orange juice, strawberry sorbet) → Smoothie (gradually decrease sorbet, increase milk) → Strawberry milk (gradually decrease strawberry syrup) → Plain Milk



Steps To Creating Your Own Food Chains

Everyone has different food preferences, so food chains are going to look different for every person. By working through the steps below with your nutritionist, you can come up a few of your own food chains to help your body get the nutrients it needs with more food variety.

STEP 1: List 10 foods that you really enjoy eating. If possible, try to choose at least one food that you like from each food group: grains (ex. bread, pasta, cereal, crackers), proteins (ex. eggs, chicken, fish, beef, beans), dairy (ex. milk, yogurt, cheese, soy milk), fruits (ex. apple, strawberries), vegetables (ex. carrots, tomato), and fats (ex. peanut butter, nuts, avocado, butter)

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

STEP 2: Based on the foods you listed above, circle your answers to questions below:

What textures do you like? Crunchy – Soft – Hard – Chewy – Lumpy – Smooth

What flavors do you like? Salty – Sweet – Spicy – Tart or Sour

How do you like your favorite foods prepared? Baked – Grilled – Fried – Sautéed

What do you like to eat with your favorite foods? _____

(Examples: butter, cheese, mustard, ketchup, mayo, barbeque sauce, hot sauce, soy sauce, ranch, hummus, peanut butter, Nutella, honey, jam)

STEP 3: What foods, if any, would you or your family like to try in the future? These could be foods that you used to like the taste of, foods that your family and friends commonly eat, or foods that you just are curious about.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

STEP 4: Make your own food chains!

What are two new foods you would like to try first?

1. _____ 2. _____

Based on your flavor and texture preferences and favorite condiments, work with your nutritionist to brainstorm how you can gradually introduce this new food:

Favorite Food: _____ → _____ → _____ → New Food: _____

Favorite Food: _____ → _____ → _____ → New Food: _____

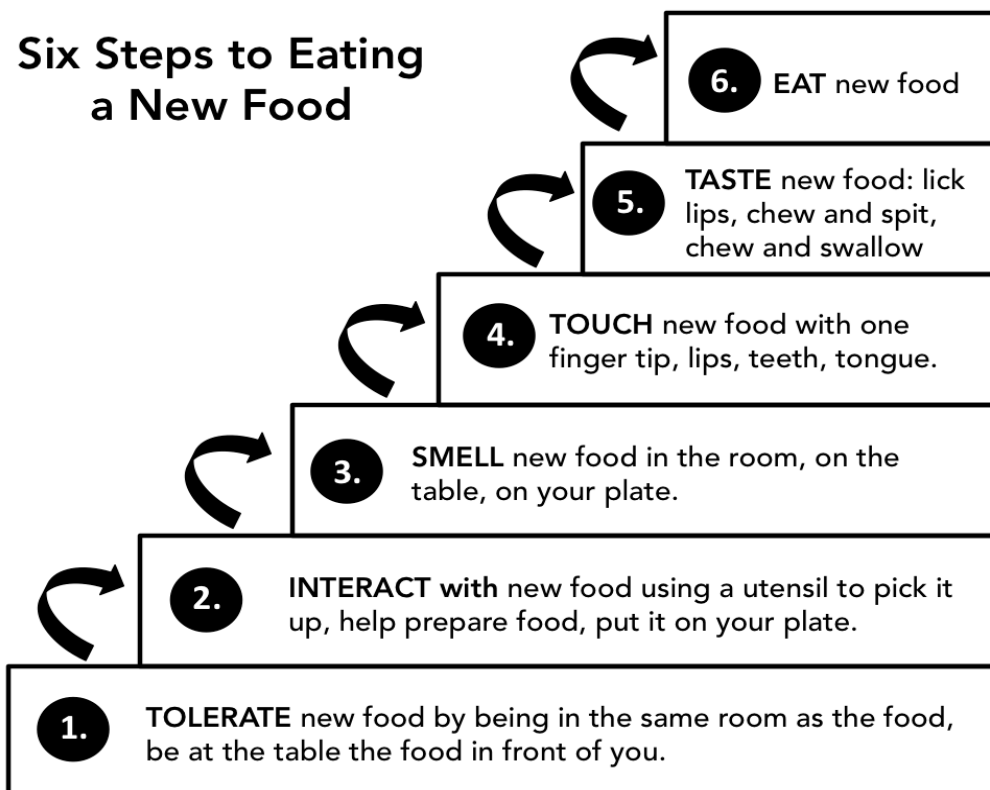
Strategies to Help You Along the Way

1. **Only introduce one or two new foods at a time:** Trying more than that can make the experience overwhelming and stressful. Always pair new foods with familiar foods.
2. **Try new foods during the time of day that you're most hungry:** You'll be more open and willing to taste new foods if you have an appetite.
3. **Keep track and rate the taste of new foods on a scale of 1 to 10** (1 = Don't like it yet, 5 = Okay, 10 = Delicious!): Be sure to write down how it was prepared so that you can experiment with different preparation methods next time if you disliked a food.
4. **Try and try again:** It can take someone 10 to 20 times to try a food before deciding if they like the taste of it because taste buds take time to get used to new flavors.

Not Sure You're Ready to Try New Foods?

Sometimes, the idea of trying a new food can make teens very anxious. If you're feeling this way, don't worry! Your nutritionist can work with you where you are to help you become more comfortable with the idea of trying new foods and drinks using a different approach.

Based on research from a pediatric psychologist, the step-by-step approach outlined below can help you try new foods by allowing your senses to slowly adapt.



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

What Does This Mean For Me?

Take a few minutes to think through the information shared in this handout and answer the questions listed below:

1. On a scale of 0 to 10, how motivated are you to try a new food?
2. What are one or two new foods that are you interested in experimenting with?
3. When, where, and how will you experiment with this new food?

To Learn More:

Fraker C, Fishbein M, Cox S, Walbert L. *Food Chaining: The proven 6-step plan to stop picky eating, solve feeding problems, and expand your child's diet* (2007).

Rowell K, McGlothlin J. *Helping Your Child Through Extreme Picky Eating* (2015).