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## SIMPLE STEPS TO ADD NEW FOODS: A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS

This week is Eating Disorder Awareness Week and the theme is Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)! We're sharing simple steps to add new foods with caregivers of young people with ARFID. Introducing new foods to a young person with ARFID can be a challenging journey, but it's important to approach it with patience and understanding. [...]



## Simple Steps to Add New Foods: A Guide for Caregivers

This week is Eating Disorder Awareness Week and the theme is Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID)! We're sharing simple steps to add new foods with caregivers of young people with ARFID.

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Introducing new foods to a young person with ARFID can be a challenging journey, but it's important to approach it with patience and understanding. Here are some simple suggestions to help your child add new foods to their diet:

1. **Transparent Communication:** Ensure your young person knows which new foods will be introduced and when. Avoid surprises, as they may cause stress. Let them take the lead in choosing the foods they want to try, and agree on a relaxed and calm approach to trying them.
2. **Praise Effort, Not Outcome:** Focus on praising your young person's effort rather than the outcome of their eating. Avoid putting pressure on them to eat, as it can be counterproductive. Rewarding effort, such as with extra TV time, can show positive progress without adding pressure.
3. **Celebrate Progress:** Acknowledge any attempt to try new foods, even if only a tiny bit is eaten or none at all. Exposure to new foods, even just being in their presence, is progress worth praising and encouraging.
4. **Persistence Pays Off:** Encourage your young person to try foods multiple times, even if they didn't like them on the first try. It can take up to 14 exposures for a young person to like a new food, so persistence and repetition are key.
5. **Maintain Safe Foods:** Keep the portion size of "safe foods" consistent to ensure your child gets the energy they need. Introduce new foods in small, optional portions until they become part of their regular intake.
6. **Separate New and Safe Foods:** Keep new foods separate from safe foods to avoid rejection of previously accepted foods. Mixing foods may limit the range of intake and make the process more challenging.
7. **Practice Outside Meal Times:** Conduct food exposure exercises outside of regular meal times to reduce pressure and expectations. Practicing when your young person is not hungry can lead to a more positive outcome.
8. **Manage Expectations:** Set realistic expectations for progress and be patient. Small, consistent steps are often more effective than sudden changes. Remember, this process takes time.
9. **Avoid Food Manipulation:** Refrain from adding calories or disguising foods to encourage eating. Manipulating foods may lead to distrust and resistance from your young person.
10. **Create a Consistent Routine:** Maintain a predictable food routine to manage anxiety during food exposures. Consistency and predictability can help ease the process for both you and your young person.
11. **Consider the Environment:** Keep the food environment as safe and familiar as possible to avoid overwhelming changes. Ask your young person what works best for them to create a supportive environment.
12. **Lead by Example:** Model positive eating behaviors by trying new foods yourself or eating alongside your young person. This can help demonstrate that the food is safe to eat.
13. **Stay Calm and Relaxed:** Manage your own emotions and avoid anxious behaviors around mealtimes. Practicing relaxation techniques can help you stay calm and supportive for your young person.

Remember, every one is different, and progress may vary. Be patient, stay supportive, and try following these simple steps to add new foods.

For more information on simple steps to add new foods, download the full resource: [Adding New Foods. \(https://bebodypositive.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Adding-New-Foods.pdf\)](https://bebodypositive.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Adding-New-Foods.pdf)

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For support with ARFID, check out our [modules](#), and visit [arfidawarenessuk.org](http://arfidawarenessuk.org).

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