



# Avoiding Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) in children and youth

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## Abstract

### OBJECTIVE

- To give an overview of diagnosis, subtypes, and clinical challenges of ARFID
- To present the SOS approach to feeding (Sequential Oral Sensory) as an example of a systematic desensitization method for skills and behaviors necessary to overcome eating avoidance.
- To discuss practical applications of principles from the SOS approach in mental health eating disorder services.

### DESCRIPTION

ARFID is a newer diagnosis introduced with DSM-5 and in the newly published ICD-11. Individuals with ARFID have health-threatening difficulties meeting their nutritional needs due to factors other than weight and shape concerns. While treatment evidence is still scarce, findings indicate a frequent overlap with developmental disorders. We will present diagnostic criteria of ARFID and the subtypes or mechanisms leading to under-eating, as well as basic principles of cognitive and family-based treatments.

Next, the SOS Approach to Feeding will be presented as an example of a systematic approach to gradual desensitization in children and young people who need a comprehensive intervention and do not benefit from less intensive therapies.

The SOS Approach integrates factors as motor skills, oral abilities, behavioral and learning aspects, medical considerations, sensory factors, and nutritional elements. The program is rooted in the developmental milestones associated with typical feeding patterns; employs positive

reinforcement and creates a systematic desensitization hierarchy; focuses on increasing the child's comfort level by exploring and learning about the various qualities of food without feeling pressure from the surroundings. Among basic principles are Systematic Desensitization instead of flooding, and Food Hierarchies/Choices and avoiding food jags.

**Topics:** Treatment

### For workshops only

Participants will be invited to reflect on and share their clinical experience with ARFID patients or mixture of ARFID elements in other eating disorders. They will be able to participate in small experiential tasks related to awareness of breath, postural stability, and exposure work, and discuss potential usefulness in their own clinical practice.

**Submission Format:** Workshop

**Is It a Student Paper?** No