Picky Eating or Selective Eating Disorder? Take the Quiz

In my private practice as a pediatric dietitian, I see a lot of children who are identified by their parents as a “picky eater”. Some of these children are going through a food jag or hitting a new stage as a toddler. At times, issues can be more complex with sensory or oral motor challenges that need to be addressed. I’ve seen children with selective eating disorders, like ARFID, Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder. These children can benefit from additional treatment and therapies. Take this quiz to help determine if your child is just another picky eater or has a selective eating disorder.

**Picky Eating or Selective Eater Quiz:**

How many foods does child typically eat?
A) More then I can count    B) At least 20 or more    C) No more then 20 foods, likely less.

Has your child lost weight or having trouble gaining weight?
A) No    B) I don’t know, I haven’t weighed him    C) Yes

Has there been nutrition deficiencies discovered with recent lab work?
A) No, all normal    B) Not sure, we haven’t tested    C) Yes, low in at least one nutrient (iron, Vitamin D are most common)

Does your child show anxiety around food and eating new foods?
A) None    B) Sometimes    C) Yes, most of the time or often

Does your child’s eating affect their relationships with friends?
A) Not at all    B) Their friends think their eating habits are weird    C) Yes, they avoid activities around food.

Does your child have a strong sense of smell and/or taste?
A) Not that I’m aware of    B) They do like to smell things    C) They react to strong smells and smell everything.

Does your child experience gagging, vomiting when trying new food?
A) No    B) Sometimes    C) Often
Are foods that were previously enjoyed but lost during a food jag, ever re-acquired after a food break?
A) Yes, will avoid a certain food for awhile, but start to eat again eventually.   B) Sometimes
C) No, not eating a lot of foods they use to enjoy when younger.

Is there an entire category of food texture or a food group that is missing from your child’s diet?
A) No, enjoys a variety of crunchy and smooth foods.   B) Sometimes   C) Mainly eats crunchy food
or smooth, not much of both.

Does your child worry about vomiting or food causing them to choke or be sick?
A) No, this isn’t a problem   B) Once   C) Yes, often

Calculate your answers, add up how many A’s, B’s and C’s.

If most of your answers were “A’s” you have a typical child and if they are displaying picky eating
behavior, they likely will grow out of it. I recommend reading Child of Mine by Ellyn Satter, RD, to
help improve the feeding behavior at home or see my blog post on tips for parents with a picky eater.

If most of your answers were “B’s” you could benefit from having your child evaluated by a dietitian or
feeding specialist. If your child is eating 20 or less foods and appears to show some avoidant
behavior of some food groups, it’s best to have him evaluated prior to becoming more selective.

If the majority of your answers were “C’s”, I strongly recommend you see a dietitian and consider an
evaluation by an Occupational Therapist and/or a Speech pathologist. They likely aren’t just going to
grow out of it. If your child is eating less then 20 foods and limiting foods based on texture, taste and
past experiences, they would be classified as having ARFID (Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake
Disorder). ARFID is a type of eating disorder where the consumption of certain foods is limited based
on the food’s appearance, smell, taste, texture, or a past negative experience with the food.