

Eating When Nothing Sounds Good

Finding a possible next step without pressure

Sometimes hunger is there but nothing appeals. Sometimes appetite signals are absent or confusing. This can happen with ARFID, sensory overload, burnout, low mood, pain, nausea, medication, illness, decision fatigue or differences in interoception.

Start with sensory clues, not a meal name

Temperature	Cool / room temperature / warm
Feel	Dry / moist / smooth / textured
Effort	Sip / spoon / chew
Intensity	Plain / mild / stronger flavour

Three routes to a manageable possibility

Known-safe: Something familiar that usually feels predictable. Different-sensory: A change in temperature, texture or presentation, without forcing an unfamiliar food. Supported: Ask someone to offer two suitable choices, prepare food, sit nearby or help communicate.

A six-step decision ladder

1. Notice what is difficult right now: appetite, nausea, smell, texture, energy or choice.
2. Check immediate needs and safety: allergies, swallowing guidance, food hygiene and any care plan.
3. Choose one sensory clue (for example, cool or smooth).
4. Pick a route: known-safe, different-sensory or supported.
5. Identify one possible option and the smallest helpful action (such as getting it ready).
6. Reassess without blame. If it does not work, change the clue, route or support.

When the first option does not work

That is information, not failure. Consider whether the temperature, smell, portion presentation, utensils, setting or preparation needs changing. It is okay to return to a familiar option or ask for help. Avoid turning one difficult moment into a permanent rule.

Helpful words from others

Try: "Would it help if I offered two options?" "Do you want me to prepare something familiar?" "Would you like company or quiet?" Avoid pressure, bargaining, criticism or comments about how much someone has eaten.

Quick personal plan

Known-safe possibility: _____ Different-sensory possibility: _____

Support I can ask for: _____ One clue I noticed today: _____

Health and safety boundaries

Do not use this sheet to override allergy precautions, prescribed dietary needs, swallowing recommendations or food-safety guidance. If eating or drinking is persistently difficult, intake is very limited, or there are signs of dehydration or physical deterioration, seek prompt medical advice. If you cannot swallow safely or have urgent symptoms, seek urgent help.

A note from Maggie: You do not have to find the perfect food. A safe, manageable possibility - with support if needed - is enough to explore for now.

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