

Addressing Food Insecurity with People on Dialysis¹

Food insecurity is a major concern for millions of Americans. In fact, over 33.8 million Americans (10.4%) lived in households that struggled against food insecurity or lacked access to affordable and nutritious foods in 2021. People who live in rural parts of the United States experience deeper struggles with hunger compared to those who live in urban areas, with higher rates of food insecurity overall (10.8 percent in rural areas compared to 10.1 percent in metro areas). Black (19.8 percent) and Latinx (16.2) households are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity – rates of food insecurity in 2021 are triple and double the rate of White households (7.0).²

Screening for Food Insecurity with People Receiving Dialysis

Addressing food insecurity with people receiving dialysis is very important. Food insecurity can be temporary or long-lasting. Many people may not be forthcoming about their lack of nutritious food and cultural beliefs may make them reluctant to ask for help. Let them know that people need help sometimes, encourage help-seeking behaviors, and reinforce that it is okay to use available resources. Dialysis facility staff (i.e., nurse, registered dietician and/or social worker) should meet with patients on their first day of dialysis to screen for any immediate health-related social needs, including housing instability, food insecurity, and lack of transportation.

Impacts for Patients Receiving Dialysis

Food insecurity has a major impact on the overall health of people receiving dialysis.

- Acid Inducing Diets: Caused by limited fruits and vegetables.
- Inadequate Nutrition: Affect fluid status which impacts blood pressure, electrolytes, and overall acid/base balance.
- Higher Prevalence of Interactions with Healthcare System: Unplanned hospitalizations, intensive care unit admissions, and infections.
- Forced Choices: Having to choose between gas and food, medication and food, and rent and food.

Resources

- Feeding America's nationwide network of food banks and food programs have helped millions of people find food and groceries in their communities every year. You can search by zip code and state to learn more about upcoming free food distributions in your service area: [Find Your Local Food Bank | Feeding America](#).
- For immediate food assistance, food stamps (SNAP benefits), WIC, school meals and food programs for children, and food assistance for Native Americans, USA Gov's website can help you search by your state and help you find local programs to apply for [Food assistance | USAGov](#).
- For soup kitchens, local pantries, food shelves, and subsidized groceries, you can search by state at [FoodPantries.Org](#).
- For Meals on Wheels, search by zip code for available resources: [Meals on Wheels America](#)

Sources:

1. This handout uses information from: [Food Insecurity: Patient Impact and Implications for End Stage Renal Disease Healthcare Providers \(esrdncc.org\)](#)
2. [Hunger & Poverty in America - Food Research & Action Center \(frac.org\)](#)