

Food Insecurity

Lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life, due to a lack of financial resources for food at the household level



Challenges for Caregivers

Overlapping life challenges force families to make trade-offs between housing or medical bills and nutritionally adequate food

Assistance Programs

Determine if you qualify for the following food and co-pay assistance programs. Visit each website to review enrollment requirements.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):

Provides benefits to low-income individuals and families to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores.



Women, Infants & Children (WIC):

Provides supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk.



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF):

Provides families with financial assistance and related support services, which may include childcare assistance, job preparation, and work assistance.



Co-payment Assistance:

Co-payment assistance foundations can help with costs of co-payments, medications, transportation and living expenses (e.g., rent/mortgage, utilities, food).



Summer, Afterschool, and Weekend Meal and Supplemental Food "Backpack" Programs:

Provides low-income children access to nutritious foods when school is not in session.



National School Lunch Program:

Meal program operating in schools and residential child care institutions to provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

Community Resources



Additional emergency and medically tailored resources could be available in your community.



Food Pantries:

Food pantries, permanent locations or mobile distributions, serve those who experience food insecurity within a specified area.



Soup Kitchens and Congregate Meals:

Free or donation-based meals served in community settings (e.g., soup kitchens, senior centers, places of worship).



Home-Delivered Meals:

Numerous services offer home-delivered meals to vulnerable populations (e.g., Meals on Wheels for Seniors). Other programs deliver medically tailored meals to those living with critical and chronic illness. The *Food is Medicine Coalition* is an association of medically tailored food and nutrition services providers across the U.S.

Support for Accessing Resources



Knowing available options is a critical first step, but trained staff or volunteers can help you answer questions, determine eligibility, and apply.

Patient Navigators:

Work with patients onsite at hospitals or clinics to provide supportive services, such as help applying for benefits, helping locate food banks, addressing transportation barriers, and other types of support services. Patient navigators can also assist patients in meeting other needs, such as housing, medical insurance, or Medicaid assistance.

United Way 2-1-1:

Helps people locate and access resources in their community such as food pantries, meal delivery services, and public benefits like SNAP and WIC.

SNAP: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>; **WIC:** <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>; **TANF:** <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/tanf>; **Co-Pay:** https://www.cancercare.org/publications/284-how_co-payment_assistance_foundations_help; **Summer Meals:** <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>; **NSLP:** <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp>

Tips for Caregivers

The following strategies could help as you contend with time and financial strain, while caring for loved one. Taking care of your own well-being is also an important strategy to maintain a healthy lifestyle and prevent additional health care costs.

Well-Planned Shopping Trips to Save Time and Money



- Meal plan in advance to help avoid impulse buying
- Consider using an online tool or app (Fooducate, Shopwell)
- Organize list by store section



- Consider a mix of fresh, frozen and canned foods
- Include budget-friendly foods (oats, potatoes, frozen vegetables, bulk bags of dried beans, whole grains, nuts)
- Buy frozen foods or meats on sale and freeze for later use



Meal Preparation

- Choose a day to prep healthy meals and snacks for the week
- Find healthy slow cooker recipes that can cook overnight or while you're at work
- Double recipes, portion out individual servings, and freeze in labeled containers

Keep Yourself Healthy

1



Eat regular, balanced meals to give you the fuel you need to stay healthy and energized.

2



Avoid fast foods, which tend to be unhealthy high-fat and high-calorie foods.

3



Get enough rest and exercise to maintain health, relieve stress, and help you be a better caregiver.

4



Reach out for help from friends and family

- Order meals from a healthy-meal delivery service
- Caring Bridge and Lotsa Helping Hands apps allow you to request help from a support network

Help Survivors Get Proper Nutrition

Food insecurity and dietary quality have impacts throughout prevention, active treatment, and survivorship. The tips below may help ensure proper nutrition.

Manage Common Eating Struggles

Light a candle or play music to make meals (and meal prep) more relaxing

Use smaller plates to make portions less intimidating when appetite is low

Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day instead of big meals less often

If experiencing digestive issues, take a break and try to eat again later

Enlist the help of a registered dietitian to create a nutrition plan

Healthy Tips and Substitutions



Offer nutrient-dense snacks like fruit with yogurt, cheese and crackers, nuts, and granola bars
Try shakes and smoothies packed with a balance of fruits/vegetables, fats, and proteins
Consider adding a protein powder or ready-to-drink shakes for added calories/protein
Use a food journal to record eating habits to share with the healthcare team to help address nutritional concerns



Canned vegetables should be labeled as "low sodium" or "no salt added"
Canned fruits should be labeled as "in water" or "in 100% juice"



Substitute 90% lean ground chicken or turkey for beef to lower fat content
Substitute beans for half or all of the meat in a recipe (works well with soups and chilis) for a good source of protein and fiber
Substitute rolled oats or wheat bran for breadcrumbs to add more dietary fiber



Replace refined grains (white rice/flour) with whole grains (brown rice/whole-wheat flour) for a good source of dietary fiber
Replace salt with other flavorful ingredients such as lemon juice and fresh or dried herbs
Replace juices with unsweetened, low-fat beverages such as unsweetened non-dairy milks, dairy milk, or plain coconut water

ACS Caregiver Resource Guide and Caregiver Support Video Series

For more resources to support you as a caregiver, better understand what your loved one is going through, develop skills for coping and caring, taking steps to protect your own well-being, and connections to other caregiver support resources, please visit cancer.org/caregiverguide and cancer.org/caregivervideos.