




**American
Cancer
Society®**

Food Insecurity

Root Causes and Impact on Cancer Survivors and Caregivers

Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity Defined

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 

Who Is Affected?

More than 35 million adults & 11 million children



were food insecure
in 2019

Impact on Health



Budget

Low-income families stretch their budgets by purchasing inexpensive, nutrient-poor foods



Transportation

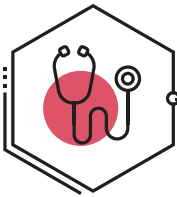
Limited vehicle access can prevent a family from obtaining affordable and nutritious food



Nutritious Food Access

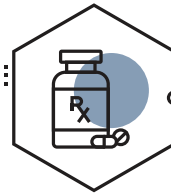
Nutrient-poor foods and drinks are abundant and often highly marketed

Food insecurity and dietary quality impact cancer survivors and caregivers, throughout the cancer continuum 



Prevention

Lower-income households are at a greater risk for obesity, which is a leading risk factor for ~13 types of cancer



Active Treatment

Poor nutrition puts cancer patients at higher risk of treatment complications and breaks in treatment, *limiting their ability to beat cancer*



Survivorship

Promote quality of life and reduce risk of cancer recurrence

Financial Impact Among Cancer Survivors

Financial Toxicity

The stress cancer survivor households experience as a result of out-of-pocket expenses due to their treatment and loss of employment




Average Work-Time Lost:
5 weeks in first year


Loss of Employment:

Time needed for treatment, Impact on performance 

Income Loss/Treatment Costs:


\$10K is average monthly cost for cancer drugs 

Impact on Cancer Treatment:


24% avoided filling prescription
20% took less than prescribed amount 

Financial Toxicity Across the Lifespan


A recent study on financial worry and food insecurity among cancer survivors across the lifespan found that it was most pronounced among ages 18 to 39. Potential factors include:

 Coping with medical costs

 Fewer earning opportunities

 Paying off student loans

 Fulfilling mortgage/rent obligations

 Limited ability to plan for retirement

 Child-rearing costs

Impact of Caring for a Cancer Survivor

A family caregiver is anyone who provides physical and/or emotional care for an ill or disabled loved one at home

Cancer Caregiver Profile



Average Age: 55 y/o

Gender: Women (65%)

Spouse (66%) or Offspring (18%)




Cancer Caregiver Duties

- Emotional Support
- Give information and guidance about treatments; communicate with medical staff
- Help with household chores, grocery shopping, meal preparation, daily needs (dressing, bathing)
- Provide financial support
- Provide transportation/accompany to treatments
- Help administer medications and manage cancer-related symptoms


Impact on Cancer Caregivers

Time Commitment

 Caregivers may struggle to balance employment and caregiving duties:


- Approximately 50% of caregivers have other employment
- On average, caregivers provide 8.3 hours of care per day for 13.7 months


Financial Implications

 Caregivers' time cost over a 2-year period is estimated at \$38,000 to \$73,000

Effect on Health and Wellness

 Caregivers with unmet financial needs report poorer mental health

 Employed caregivers with higher income and education report better physical and mental health (e.g., quality of life)

 Feeling unprepared and overwhelmed in their role can lead to:

- Deterioration of their mental and physical health (40% find caregiving emotionally difficult, and 12% experienced depression)
- Decline in quality of life, including an increased risk of developing chronic disease, depression, and anxiety

Call to Action

Partnerships

- Corporate partners and their caregivers are essential, in particular food distribution and retail to support strategies to increase food security among cancer survivors
- Health care partnerships could be an avenue for providing information and training for food insecurity screenings and referrals

Programmatic

- Meal delivery and medically tailored meals facilitate cancer survivors meeting dietary needs while undergoing treatment
- Leveraging transportation services for caregivers, volunteers, or cancer survivors receiving treatment could be an opportunity to provide access to food pantries, grocery stores, and other food-related agencies/services (mobile markets can alleviate transportation limitations)
- Pop-up food pantries in clinical settings have been a successful model to support food insecure patients and caregivers

Research

- Development of a research strategy is needed to better understanding the intersection of food insecurity and cancer survivorship and the impact of potential solutions

Policy

- Supporting additional policy work at the local, state, and federal levels that positively impact programs and services for cancer survivors and their caregivers