Food Insecurity and Chronic Disease

If you struggle with having enough food for yourself and your family, or struggle to afford nutritious foods such as fruits and vegetables, you are not alone. In Alabama, 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 4 children struggle with food insecurity (or having enough food for an active, healthy life). For many people, fixed expenses such as housing and medication are covered first, leaving little for more flexible expenses such as the food budget. Sometimes, this leads to purchasing lower quality food to make sure there's enough to go around.

Food insecurity affects the physical and mental well-being of people of all ages. Many households who struggle with food insecurity include one or more family members living with a chronic disease such as high blood pressure or diabetes. The combination of stress and poor nutrition can make managing a chronic disease even more challenging. Frequently, the time and money spent caring for a chronic disease strains the food budget even more, creating a cycle that increases the risk that the person's health will get worse and the food budget will continue to shrink. Poor dietary intake during pregnancy and early childhood can increase the risk for birth defects, anemia, low birth weight, preterm birth, and other developmental risks.

Food insecurity is particularly high among

- Low income households
- Households with children, especially those with a single parent
- Women and men living alone
- Black and Hispanic households

Are You Experiencing Food Insecurity?

Answering these questions can help you determine if your household is experiencing food insecurity:

1. **Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.**
   - ☐ Often
   - ☐ Sometimes
   - ☐ Never

2. **Within the past 12 months, food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more.**
   - ☐ Often
   - ☐ Sometimes
   - ☐ Never

If you answer "sometimes" or "often" to either question, your household is likely experiencing food insecurity. For assistance with food and other resources, **dial 2-1-1** or check out the resources listed on the back.

Food Access Resources

If you or someone you know needs help with having enough food for an active, healthy life, these resources may be able to help.

SNAP The purpose of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is to end hunger and improve nutrition by providing monthly benefits to help eligible low-income households buy the food needed for good health. Call 1-866-465-2285 or visit mydhr.alabama.gov for more information.

WIC Program Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a supplemental nutrition program for pregnant women, breastfeeding women, women who had a baby within the last 6 months, infants, and children under the age of 5. To find out more about the WIC program and see if you are eligible to participate, download the free "Alabama WIC" app in your app store, call 1-888-942-4673, or visit alabamapublichealth.gov/wic.

Elderly Nutrition Program The Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP) provides seniors with nutritious meals and the opportunity to be active while also building new friendships. In some areas, a meal delivery program is also available for homebound seniors who qualify. There is no charge for the meal. Find out more at AlabamaAgeline.gov/elderly-nutrition-program or call 1-800-AGE-LINE (243-5463) to sign up.

Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) provides eligible seniors with a $50 benefit card to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from certified farmers at farmers markets and farm stands in the State of Alabama. Applications open around mid-January each year and close after the maximum number of participants is reached (which varies depending on funding). Applicants must reapply online every year at agi.alabama.gov/farmersmarket.

Double Up Food Bucks Alabama Double Up Food Bucks Alabama allows SNAP participants to stretch their SNAP dollars even further when purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables. SNAP participants get an additional dollar in fresh fruits and vegetables for every dollar they spend on these items with their SNAP benefits at participating locations, up to $20 per day. Visit hsi.auburn.edu/au-dufb to learn more and see participating sites near you.

+Add Milk! For every dollar of SNAP benefits a participant uses to purchase healthy fluid milk (skim and 1%) at a participating retailer, +Add Milk! provides a dollar in additional SNAP items. Visit hsi.auburn.edu/au-addmilk to learn more and see participating sites.

Alabama Child Nutrition Program The Alabama Child Nutrition Program (CNP) provides nutritious meals to children, and in some cases their families and the community, often at no or low cost. Check with your local school district to find out what resources are available in your area. For summer meal site locations, visit fns.usda.gov/summer/sitefinder or check with your school district.

Food Pantries Food pantries provide free perishable and non-perishable items, including dairy products like milk and cheese, fruits, vegetables, bread, canned goods, and frozen meats. The process for picking up food varies, some have a supermarket style of atmosphere, while others provide pre-loaded boxes. Visit 211connectsalabama.org/food-pantries to find a food pantry near you.

Interactive Food Assistance Map Child hunger is one of Alabama's biggest problems, with 1 in 4 children unsure where their next meal will come from. Students facing food insecurity could be 2 years behind their classmates and hunger makes children twice as likely to get sick. To find food assistance resources near you, visit hsi.auburn.edu/alabama-food-map.php.