

Help for Food-Insecure Patients at Hennepin

What is Food Insecurity?

Over **25%** of Hennepin Healthcare's patient families are food insecure, which means they don't have enough food to feed themselves or their families on a consistent basis. Food insecurity looks like:

- Being worried about running out of food before your next paycheck.
- Having to decide between paying your utility bills and buying food.
- Going without meals so your children can eat.
- Only being able to afford "junk food" instead of nutritious food.
- Not knowing where your next meal is coming from.

How does it affect health?

For adults, not having stable access to enough nutritious food is linked to diabetes, heart disease, depression, anxiety, and overall poor health. For children, food insecurity can affect growth and development, and it also increases risk for birth defects, asthma, and problems at school (intellectual and social). When seniors don't get adequate nutrition, it can cause confusion and weakness, on top of other health risks. It's hard for anyone to be healthy and feel good when they're hungry.

What are we doing to address this problem?

Hennepin Health has two programs to help our food-insecure patients:

1. Referrals to Second Harvest Heartland

We have a relationship with Second Harvest Heartland (SHH) where we can refer our patients to them, and then they call our patients to help them get ongoing resources for food support. SHH outreach coordinators can enroll our patients in SNAP and WIC over the phone. They can also direct patients to food shelves and free meals in their neighborhoods and connect them with discounted groceries. Any staff member who uses Epic can put in a referral to SHH. Just type "food" into the referral box and it will come up.

2. Food bags

We have shelf-stable, nutritionally balanced bags of food on hand for any patient who needs it. Any staff member can give food bags to patients who need them. You don't have to sign the bags out, or record who is getting or giving them. We have five varieties.

- Beet: pasta, sauce, chicken, vegetables.
- Apple: oatmeal, peanut butter, applesauce.
- Carrot: beans, rice, tomatoes, corn.



- Ready-to-Eat 1: Chicken salad, crackers, granola bar, applesauce, orange juice.
- Ready-to-Eat 2: Beef stick, Cheez-its crackers, granola bar, applesauce, orange juice.



QUESTIONS? Ask Jennette: Jennette.Turner@hcmcd.org