

Finding Solutions to Address Food Insecurity in the Kidney Community



Food insecurity is a significant barrier to achieving optimal health for people with end stage renal disease (ESRD). In 2023, 18 million (13.5%) of United States households were food insecure at some time.¹

Negative Impacts of Food Insecurity for People With ESRD²

- Increase in unplanned hospitalizations
- Higher rates of infection
- Higher risk of mortality



The healthcare team can help patients by identifying any unspoken health-related social needs and exploring solutions for patients to obtain food services in addressing food insecurity.

Use one or a few clarifying questions to see if an individual is at risk for food insecurity and explore further if necessary...

- Do you have access to food at home?
- Where do you get your food? Do you have people who help you get food? Who does your grocery shopping?
- Do you ever have to use money you usually spend on food to pay for other things? Do you ever skip meals or eat less because you run low on money?
- How do you prepare most of your meals? Do you cook, use the microwave, or eat cold foods?

Food insecurity can bring up feelings of shame and embarrassment. Building a trusting relationship with your patients is vital to ensure open communication and transparency around patient needs.



Try one or any of these approaches to address food insecurity:

Get Involved

- Start small with a “Protein Pantry”, where staff and patients can simply donate canned tuna, salmon, or chicken to help others within their facility.
- Try an ongoing clinic-based food pantry, where staff can donate any kidney-friendly food item that allows patients access to appropriate nutrition.
- Host a grocery “shopping simulation” for patients, where staff can share best practices for grocery shopping, tailored to specific budget and dietary needs.

Partner With the Community

- Partner with food banks that offer refrigerated lockers where patients can have easy access to food.
- Develop a dialysis food pharmacy, where community health centers can partner with the dialysis facility to provide patients with kidney-friendly food items, low-cost recipes, and educational resources on nutrition.
- Use the dialysis center as a food distribution spot to help reduce transportation barriers.

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food Security in the U.S. Available at: www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/.

Accessed on: November 25, 2024.

2. Ferrara F, Siligato R, Maria A, et al. Food insecurity and kidney disease: A systematic review. *International Urology and Nephrology*. 2023; 56(3):1035–1044.

