



Food insecurity is associated with higher health care use and costs among Canadian adults

Li, Tim "Food insecurity is associated with higher health care use and costs among Canadian adults"
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What the researchers did

The researchers examined the relationship between food insecurity and healthcare use for adults in Canada by linking survey data on food insecurity with hospital records regarding acute care hospitalization and same-day surgeries. They also estimated the costs associated with the healthcare service utilization.

What the researchers found

As the severity of food insecurity increases, so does the odds of acute care admission, having same-day surgery, and being a high-cost user (being part of the top 5% highest cost-incurring users). Of those who were admitted to acute care, more severely food insecure adults stayed longer in hospital and were more likely to be readmitted.

RDC Datasets used

Canadian Community Health Survey
(CCHS) 2005–17

Discharge Abstract Database

Policy areas this research can inform

- Government
- Health

Policy implications of this research

Whereas previous studies demonstrate the relationship between food insecurity and poor health using self-reported health measures, this study does so on a national level using clinical health data. Food insecurity presents a serious burden on health outcomes, healthcare services, and healthcare spending. The findings suggest that reducing food insecurity may result in decreased health care use and expenditures. Other studies have shown that policy interventions can reduce food insecurity by improving households' financial resources. Given that food-insecure adults often have difficulty affording prescription drugs, pharmacare may also be a policy that could improve health and reduce health care use and costs.

Read the full article

Men, F., Gundersen, C., Urquia, M.L., & Tarasuk, V. (2020). Food Insecurity Is Associated With Higher Health Care Use And Costs Among Canadian Adults: Study examines the association of food insecurity with acute care hospitalization, same-day surgery, and acute care costs among Canadian adults. *Health Affairs*, 39(8), 1377-1385. <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2019.01637>

