

Food Security and Nutrition Security: The Importance of Healthy Options for Utah's Vulnerable



Food security and nutrition security are closely related but are distinctly different concepts. Food security ensures that people have enough food to avoid hunger. In contrast, nutrition security goes beyond having enough food to eat and focuses on food quality for a healthy life. A healthy diet will help achieve nutrition security and includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, low-fat dairy, and healthy fats. These foods provide essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants necessary for maintaining good health.

Proper nutrition is a fundamental component of good health. It also plays a critical role in reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and diabetes.

Since food is a flexible budget item, when food costs increase with rising inflation, individuals and families can be forced to make difficult choices, such as buying cheaper and less nutritious foods or reducing the amount of food they consume. Nutrition security is vital for vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people living in poverty. These populations often rely on inexpensive, calorie-dense foods that lack essential nutrients, leading to adverse health outcomes.

Promoting nutrition security requires addressing the root causes, such as lack of access to healthy foods and limited education on nutrition and healthy eating. Consider these strategies for promoting nutrition security.

* **Encourage healthy eating habits.** Learning about nutrition education programs can help individuals understand healthy eating habits, meal planning, and budgeting for healthy foods. The Create Better Health (Snap-Ed) program in Utah provides nutrition education classes and a wealth of resources, including menu planning, eating healthy on a budget, basic cooking skills, recipes, and increasing physical activity.

* **See if you qualify for federal assistance programs.** Depending on household income, there are many federal programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program, senior's farmers market, and free or reduced school lunches. To learn more about available assistance programs and eligibility, visit [Utahns Against Hunger](http://UtahnsAgainstHunger.org).

* **Consider food assistance programs.** Food banks, food pantries, and ready-to-eat meals can assist individuals needing more resources for healthy foods. To find food pantries and ready-to-eat meals near you, visit FeedUtah.org

* **Learn how to access fresh, local produce.** Many programs

across Utah provide access to fresh produce, such as farmers markets, community gardens, and mobile markets. These can increase access to healthy foods in areas with limited access to grocery stores and supermarkets. You can find the list of Utah's farmers markets at the [Utah Farmers Market Network](#). You can also learn how to double up SNAP dollars at [SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks – Utah Farmers Market Network](#).

Promoting nutrition security is crucial to ensuring that vulnerable populations in Utah have access to the healthy foods they need to maintain proper nutrition, good health, and increased well-being.