

**SNAP Awareness day 2023**  
**February 16th**

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Thank you very much for providing me an opportunity to discuss the impact of providing healthy and reliable access to nutritious and affordable food to VT patients and community members.

I have worked at Central Vermont Medical Center (CVMC) for 24 years and have been an executive sponsor for CVMC's food insecurity programs for the past 10. In that time I have gained a significant appreciation for the importance of healthy food and how it is so linked to the care we provide our patients and their outcomes. Many of us at CVMC view healthy food as medicine.

Recently CVMC embarked and completed our triennial Community Health Needs Assessment. The findings showed that the proportion of food insecure residents increased in Washington County in 2020 – this is consistent with having high poverty among children. Nearly 19% of Washington County children were projected to be food insecure in 2020 as compared to 18% statewide. Projected food insecurity declined significantly in 2021 thanks to state and other initiatives, but slightly exceeded pre-pandemic years. Initiatives have included SNAP emergency allotments, Child Tax Credits, and Stimulus Checks.

[Community Health Needs Assessment | Central Vermont Medical Center \(cvmc.org\)](https://www.cvmc.org/community-health-needs-assessment)

My Experience:

CVMC has prescribed food to patients in need for 10 years as part of the VYCC Healthcare Share program. We have also supported the Veggie Van Go program and recently participated in a Farmers to You pilot for employees. We continue to see the direct link between healthy food and patients outcomes. In 2022, patients receiving shares included: 54% of the recipients suffering from high blood pressure, 47% having diabetes or pre-diabetes, 72% overweight or obese and 43% having high cholesterol.

I met a mother, while handing out VYCC Healthcare CSA Shares at our shed. She was an employee and patient of CVMC. She was also enrolled in our workforce development program working towards a LPN degree. She explained to me the impact of food insecurity on her and her family. It was clear she was challenged in providing health food for her family while also trying to balance other budgetary obligations.

CVMC's community survey feedback: Among respondents, nearly 1 in 10 or 8% "disagreed" of "strongly disagreed" that they could get the foods they wanted to eat and another 5% "neither agreed nor disagreed".

COVID 19 Impact: The University of Vermont and University of Maine conducted a Northern New England survey in March-June of 2021 to understand the initial and continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security, health behaviors, and health outcomes. Select findings are bulleted below.

- Individuals with food insecurity were significantly less likely to consume fruits and vegetables and engage in physical activity than those who report being food secure.
- Nearly half of respondents indicated anxiety or depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those with persistent food insecurity (i.e., food insecure before and during the COVID-19 pandemic) were 8.8 times more likely to experience higher levels of stress and 2.6 times more likely to experience anxiety.
- The prevalence of diabetes type 2 was approximately three times higher for Vermont survey participants compared to prior year's data for the state.
- Individuals with food insecurity were up to seven times more likely to skip or stop their medication for anxiety and/or depression, and 10 times more likely to stop their diabetes medication, as compared to food secure respondents.
- Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ were more likely to be food insecure, four times more likely to report anxiety or depression, and also experienced higher levels of stress than individuals who did not identify as LGBTQ+ during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Change in Food Security and Health Outcomes Since the COVID-19 Pandemic in Northern New England \(uvm.edu\)](https://uvm.edu)

I ask you to support programs that provide healthy food by:

- Support the Foodbank's request for \$3 million in base funding to purchase food and support community based partners.
- Make Universal School Meals Permanent and fund it from the top of the Education Fund.
- Increase funding to support the Older Vermonters Nutrition Program.

Thank you for listening and I am happy to answer any questions.

Robert Patterson