

Screening for Food Insecurity in your Practice

Always ask the question

- Ask food insecurity screening questions to all patients to normalize the dialogue
- Decide if a written or verbal screening approach is best for your practice
- Remember to screen patients at each visit; situations can change

Look for symptoms of food insecurity

- *Infants and toddlers* - frequent illnesses and hospitalizations, poor development, poor growth, behavioral problems, iron-deficiency anemia
- *Adolescents* - poor health with vague symptoms like stomachache, headache, or fatigue, poor academic performance, behavioral and mental health problems
- *Teens* - Behavioral and mental health problems including suicidal tendencies, aggression, and depression
- *Adults* - Mental health problems including anxiety and depression; poor management of chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension and obesity

Create an accepting environment

- Use posters and brochures in waiting areas, restrooms, or exam rooms that prompt patients to ask questions about community food resources
- Keep additional resources about applying for WIC, SNAP, and other food assistance programs on-hand for patients

Be sensitive in your approach

Let your patients know you are not singling them out or judging them by asking questions that exhibiting compassion and understanding.

“With the high cost of food, some of my patients say they’ve been having a tough time getting the foods they need.”

“Some of my patients have problems with getting the kinds of foods that kids need to be healthy. Has that been a problem for you?”

Visit www.vanderbiltrootedcommunityhealth.org for more information.

Rooted Community Health