

Does SNAP go beyond food security? A research brief on the effects on nutrition and health

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Researchers and Policymakers, particularly those interested in SNAP and food insecurity.

ABSTRACT: Background: Food insecurity and poverty remain drivers of health disparities. Food assistance and nutrition programs are important for addressing these issues. This research brief examines the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), specifically looking at how SNAP influences food insecurity, nutritional status, and health outcomes among Americans living in poverty.

Methods: A total of 16 studies were included in this review assessing SNAP utilization, population characteristics, and impact on food security, nutritional status and health outcomes. Studies were identified through searches of PubMed and Google Scholar.

Results: Some studies found SNAP participation was associated with increased food expenditure and nutrient availability, however evidence remains mixed or inconclusive on its impact on food security and nutritional status. Observational studies suggest that SNAP has a positive impact on health outcomes linked to food insecurity among children.

Conclusions: Research remains limited in its ability to establish causal links between SNAP participation, nutritional status, and health outcomes. More experimental designs, better measures of dietary intake, and long-term studies are needed to understand how SNAP participation relates to food security and nutritional intake. This could inform policies around SNAP benefits while addressing important factors that influence SNAP utilization.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Discuss food insecurity in the U.S. and the influence of SNAP participation on food insecurity.
- Discuss the health implications of participating in SNAP beyond food insecurity.
- Assess current evidence looking at the influence of SNAP on health and nutrition outcomes.

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