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Access to Healthy Food Lowers Rates of Hospitalization

More than half of Americans with high rates of hospitalization may not have consistent access to healthy food. A recent study published in *Population Health Management* suggests just this. Using a brief survey, study researchers interviewed 40 “super-utilizers” (patients with 3 or more visits within one year) of an urban hospital in Philadelphia in attempt to investigate unmet needs around access to food. Questions addressed food insecurity, self-reported health and the use of community food programs. Rates of food insecurity among study participants were three times greater than the 2014 USDA national average of 14.5%. This gap results in worsened health status and increased use of the health care system.

Researchers found that the most common reason for *fair* or *poor* ratings of health was poor access to adequate food related to health conditions and dependency on others. In fact, 75 percent and 58 percent of patients reported that they were unable to shop for food and prepare food on their own, respectively. Other obstacles to food security among these participants were limited knowledge of community food resources and not being able to physically carry groceries. While receiving help from caretakers or family members is undoubtedly necessary for most critically-ill patients, it often leads to a loss of control over what food is purchased, potentially putting them at risk for not having appropriate food in the home for their particular condition.

At God's Love, we know that food and nutrition are critical components in the care of people living with chronic diseases. Medically-tailored home-delivered meal programs, such as ours, provide the appropriate meals that meet an individual's needs, promoting better health outcomes, decreasing hospitalization and keeping people living happily in their homes.

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