



Food Security Fact Sheet: Ontario

The Impact of Food Security on Health Outcomes in People Living with HIV/AIDS



What is Food Security?

People who are **food-secure** are able to buy enough healthy, safe food to meet their nutritional needs at all times during the year. People who are **food-insecure** do not eat at times, because food is either not available or they are not able to afford it.

As a result of participants not having enough money to buy food:

In Ontario, people living with HIV are up to **11 times more likely** to be food-insecure, compared to the general population.



went a day without eating



went hungry



skipped meals



received food supports

Who Experiences Food Insecurity?

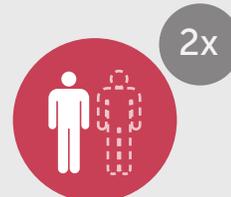
A survey of 650 people living with HIV in Ontario revealed that **69%** of them were food-insecure during the previous year. People living with HIV are **up to four times more likely** to be food-insecure if they...



ARE FROM RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES



ARE WOMEN



DON'T HAVE LIVE-IN PARTNERS



HAVE INCOMES LESS THAN \$20,000



RENT THEIR HOMES



STRUGGLE WITH HOUSING COSTS



HAVE EVER USED DRUGS



HAVE EVER BEEN TO PRISON

Notes: provincial rates of HIV come from Davis B, Tarasuk V (1994). Hunger in Canada. Agriculture and Human Values 11(4):50-57. Our study includes 2011-2012 data from Ontarians living with HIV who receive services from community-based ASOs.

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How Does Food Security Affect People Living with HIV?

Food security is a fundamental requirement to lead a healthy life. In Ontario, people living with HIV who have secure access to food report fewer health issues than those who are food-insecure.

People living with HIV who are food-secure...



Experience **30% fewer** HIV symptoms



Are **11% more likely** to take their HIV medications as prescribed



Score **17% higher** on measures of mental health-related quality of life



Score **7% higher** on measures of physical health-related quality of life



Report **78% fewer** depressive symptoms



Are **13% less likely** to feel stigmatized due to their HIV status

How Can We Address Food Security?

Food security in Ontario is affected by a wide range of social and economic factors. Any solution to food insecurity will require a long-term commitment to reducing poverty.



We must **develop holistic programs** that address the underlying causes of food insecurity, rather than tackling food insecurity alone.



We must **build stronger, broader community partnerships**, to address the social conditions under which people with HIV live, work, and age.



We must continue to support benefits such as **the Special Diet Allowance** offered by the Ontario Disability Support Program.