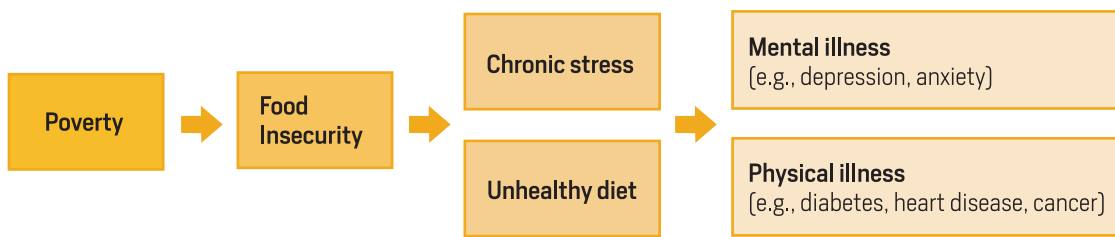




POLICY MATTERS FOR HEALTH: SNAP and WIC

In New York City, over **1.2 million people** are currently food insecure, meaning they often worry whether they will have sufficient food for themselves and their families.¹ Food insecurity can contribute to illnesses, like diabetes, heart disease, depression, and others.²



What are SNAP and WIC?

SNAP and WIC are **food assistance programs** that help people with low incomes get enough to eat. These programs help reduce the number of people experiencing food insecurity in the US.³

SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Formerly known as Food Stamps, SNAP is a federally-funded program that provides financial assistance to people with no or low incomes to help them purchase food.⁴

WIC, or the Women, Infants and Children program helps low-income pregnant women (and those who have recently given birth) and children aged 5 and under to meet their nutritional needs by providing them with vouchers that can be used to purchase foods.⁵

Why do SNAP and WIC matter for health?

SNAP and WIC improve the health of individuals and families through improved nutrition and by alleviating poverty. Evidence also suggests that these programs can boost the US economy, which means more jobs, less poverty, and better health for the broader population.



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FACTS & STATS:

1 in 7 people in NYC is food insecure¹

Each month, 20% of NYC residents rely on SNAP to eat.¹

Nearly 400,000 families in the New York Metro Area receive WIC.⁶

SNAP AND WIC MATTER FOR...

...THE HEALTH OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

By reducing poverty and improving access to nutritious food, SNAP and WIC contribute to better health outcomes for many individuals and families.

SNAP and WIC improve nutrition.

SNAP and WIC reduce food insecurity and help low income individuals and families consume a healthy diet. In fact, people who participate in the programs eat more nutritious foods than people who are eligible but do not participate.^{7,8} Nutritious diets improve child growth and development and reduce risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer in adulthood.^{9,10,11}

SNAP and WIC reduce poverty.

Food assistance programs supplement the incomes of people living in poverty by providing benefits that can be used to purchase food.¹² Not only do these programs mean that fewer people in the US go hungry, they also help low-income families afford other important necessities, like rent or transportation to work or school.¹³ Financial stability is one of the strongest predictors of long-term health and life expectancy.¹⁴

SNAP and WIC improve health outcomes.

Studies show that SNAP and WIC participants are healthier than people who are eligible but do not participate.

Compared to their peers, adults receiving SNAP and/or WIC benefits have:

- Fewer premature births and low-birth weight babies,¹⁵ and
- Less frequent hospitalizations.^{16,17}

Similarly, children who had access to SNAP are healthier in adulthood. They are less likely to develop heart disease, diabetes, and/or high blood pressure when they grow up, compared with similar children who do not receive benefits.¹⁸

...THE US ECONOMY

SNAP and WIC contribute to the US economy by improving health and increasing spending – especially during economic recessions.

SNAP and WIC help reduce the economic cost of food insecurity and poor nutrition.

Health care can be expensive, and when people are sick it is harder for them to work, pay their bills, and contribute to the economy.¹⁹ SNAP and WIC reduce the number of people that suffer from costly health conditions (e.g. premature births, diabetes, heart disease, etc.), which in turn can reduce US health care costs and lost productivity due to health problems.²⁰

SNAP and WIC contribute to economic growth.

SNAP and WIC allow people to spend more on food at local businesses. This increases demand for food, which means there are more jobs available for retail and farm workers. Experts estimate that every \$5 that the government spends on SNAP generates up to \$9 in economic activity.^{21,22}

SNAP and WIC help to stabilize the economy during recessions.

In a recession, many people lose their jobs, which means they spend less money. When people spend less money, companies often must lay off more workers, which further reduces spending and leads to a deeper recession. SNAP helps to break that cycle: in a weak economy, more people are eligible for SNAP. Spending through SNAP helps to replace some of the spending that is lost in a recession when people lose their jobs. When the economy improves, the number of people eligible for SNAP decreases. Thus, SNAP has a stabilizing effect on the economy.²³

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Fund for Public Health in New York, The United Hospital Fund, and The New York Academy of Medicine (the Academy) together lead the New York City Population Health Improvement Program (PHIP). With funding from the New York State Department of Health, the NYC PHIP aims to support regional and local planning related to population health and health equity. As part of the PHIP, the DOHMH and the Academy launched Designing a Strong and Healthy New York City (DASH-NYC), which aims to facilitate information sharing and partnerships across sectors to advance efforts related to the social determinants of health and promote health equity for all New Yorkers.

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