

What is food security?

We asked local dietitian with Alberta Health Services, Harrison Blizzard, and he explained that food security refers to “all people at all times having access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.”¹ In other words, food security is about having enough money to provide your family a nutritious diet each and every day. If you don’t have enough money to make ends meet, then your family will likely miss meals, eat less healthy alternatives or both.

With a bag of grapes costing as much as \$10, making healthy choices can be costly.

You would be shocked to know that 1 in 10 homes in Alberta experience food insecurity.² That is about 4,200 homes in Red Deer alone! Even more alarming is that 1 in 5 children live in food insecure households in Alberta.³ That includes roughly 4,000 children in Red Deer whose families have had to compromise on the quality and/or quantity of food their child receives. In the most severe cases, meals are missed, possibly for an entire day or longer.

For many of us, this is unfathomable. Yet it is happening here in Central Alberta.

One impact of not eating enough nutritious food is that it affects your concentration and energy. But it doesn’t stop there. Harrison points out that food is more than nutrition. “We all know that food is more than just fuel for our body. We also eat for enjoyment. It is usually a centerpiece at family gatherings and parties. It is comforting having a coffee or tea and catching up with a friend passing through town at the local coffee shop. It can be fun to try new foods and flavours at community events. In a world where food is so much more than nutrition for the body, it is easy to see how those with limited resources for food miss out on many of these enjoyable events.”

Not having the resources to feed your family may leave you feeling isolated. It will most likely affect your dignity.

The long-term impact on health is significant. Food insecurity may leave a person more likely to suffer multiple chronic conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, depression, and fibromyalgia.⁴

Fortunately there are things happening in Central Alberta to combat the challenges facing families that are food insecure. Check out the following links to learn more.

- [CAPRA Food Security Committee](#)
- [Bowden's efforts to 'Stretch Our Food Dollar Locally'](#)

1. Food and Agriculture Organization (1996). Rome Declaration on World Food Security. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/WFS/>
2. Tarasuk, V., Mitchell, A., & Dachner, N. (2014). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2012*. Retrieved from: <http://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Household-Food-Insecurity-in-Canada-2014.pdf>
3. Ibid
4. Tarasuk, V., Mitchell, A., McLaren, L., & McIntyre, L. (2013). Chronic physical and mental health conditions among adults may increase vulnerability to household food insecurity. *The Journal of Nutrition*, 113. Retrieved from: <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/early/2013/08/26/jn.113.178483.full.pdf+html>