

Nutrition Security Screening Tool

Tufts University, Kaiser Permanente, and Los Angeles Department of Public Health have developed a **2-item Nutrition Security Screener (NSS)**. The NSS includes a short preamble (below) to help characterize a common definition of healthy foods for the respondent, followed by two questions.

[Preamble] The next questions are about eating healthy foods – foods that support your health and well-being. Healthy foods include things like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, yogurt, and fish. These foods can be fresh, frozen, or canned; and don't have to be organic. Less healthy foods can include foods that are highly processed, pre-packaged, and can be high in salt, starch, sugar, and/or unhealthy fats.

While the optimal scoring of the NSS requires more research, one possibility is to define low nutrition security as responses of “somewhat hard” to question 1; and very low nutrition security as responses of “hard” or “very hard.” Responses to question 2 could also be integrated into scoring of the NSS – more research is needed to validate best approaches.

We note that the version hosted online may be adapted for use in different clinical and public health settings.

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“Measuring And Addressing Nutrition Security To Achieve Health And Health Equity,” Health Affairs Health Policy Brief, March 30, 2023. DOI: 10.1377/hpb20230216.926558

Nutrition Security Screener: Written Survey

The next questions are about healthy foods - foods that support your health and well-being. These foods include, for example, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, yogurt, and fish. These foods can be fresh, frozen, or canned; and don't have to be organic. Less healthy foods can include foods that are highly processed, packaged, and high in salt, starch, sugar, and unhealthy fats.

1. Thinking about the last 12 months¹, how hard was it for you or your household to regularly get and eat healthy foods that support your well-being?²
 - a. Very hard
 - b. Hard
 - c. Somewhat hard
 - d. Not very hard
 - e. Not hard at all

¹Recall period may be adapted for the intended use of the screener. ²Additional response options, e.g. "Don't know" and/or "Prefer not to answer," can be included as appropriate for the intended use of the screener.

2. People have different reasons for eating or not eating healthy foods. Please tell me which, if any, of the following reasons were true for you or your household in the last 12 months¹. [Response options include often true, sometimes true, or never true.^{2,3} For electronic survey randomize statements below.]⁴
 - a. Healthy foods are too expensive
 - b. There aren't a lot of healthy food choices at the stores where I usually shop
 - c. Stores or food pantries with healthy foods are too far away or hard to reach
 - d. I don't have a car or other transportation to reach stores or food pantries that have healthy foods
 - e. I don't have enough time to shop for healthy foods
 - f. I don't have enough time to cook healthy foods
 - g. My cooking equipment or storage space is not enough to prepare healthy foods
 - h. I don't know how to cook healthy foods
 - i. I don't know which foods are considered healthy foods
 - j. I or my family don't like the taste of healthy foods
 - k. Some of the traditional foods in my family are not very healthy
 - l. I'm not sure I qualify for food assistance programs like food stamps (also known as SNAP, or EBT) or WIC that help me buy healthy foods
 - m. I have mobility challenges or physical limitations that make it difficult for me to prepare and eat healthy foods.
 - n. Other - please specify: _____

¹ Recall period may be adapted for the intended use of the screener. ²Additional response options, e.g. "Don't know" and/or "Prefer not to answer," can be included as appropriate for the intended use of the screener. ³Response options may alternatively be binary (yes, no) to reduce burden. ⁴Question 2 is intended to be asked of everyone but can be skipped to reduce burden.