

# Medically Tailored Meals (MTM)

6 months of meals reduced hospitalizations, ED visits, and costs in Massachusetts Medicaid<sup>1</sup>



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## Key Findings

**31%**

fewer hospitalizations

**20%**

fewer emergency department visits

**\$3,433**

lower healthcare costs per patient

**98%**

of meal program costs offset

*Per-patient healthcare cost reductions in higher-risk subgroups\**

**\$12,312**

chronic kidney disease

**\$10,450**

cardiovascular disease

**\$5,597**

depression

**\$4,123**

diabetes

## About the Research

**Why does this study matter?** Poor diets are the leading cause of death and disability in the United States, with strong ties to diabetes, heart disease, and mental health. Combined healthcare spending and lost productivity from poor diets and food insecurity exceed **\$1.1 trillion each year**. Food is Medicine initiatives like MTM can be a cost-effective — and sometimes cost-saving — way to treat, manage, and prevent diet-related illness through the provision of healthy food.

**What do we know about MTM in Medicaid?** Prior studies have shown that MTM reduce hospital use and healthcare costs in other patient groups, but their impact within Medicaid had not yet been examined. This is the largest MTM study to date and the first within Medicaid. Thirteen states are now testing MTM through their Medicaid programs. Massachusetts was one of the first states to cover MTM for patients with serious health needs, through its Flexible Services Program.

**What was the intervention?** Ten home-delivered, scratch-made meals per week, typically for 6 months, provided by Community Servings in Boston, MA. Patients began with a consultation with a registered dietitian nutritionist who tailored meal plans to their medical needs, dietary preferences, mobility, and other factors. Participants were compared to patients balanced on key characteristics who did not receive these services.

**Bottom line:** MTM participants experienced fewer hospital and emergency department visits and lower total healthcare costs while on the program — with the cost reductions offsetting the program's expense. These results offer the strongest evidence to date that MTMs can improve health and lower costs within Medicaid, a program that covers more than 70 million Americans.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-026-04407-5>

\* During meal program enrollment (mean program length 7 months, range 3 months to 2.5 years)