

# Public Health and Food Security, focusing on utilization

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## Introduction

Food security is a multi-sector domain that directly affects the population's health. Food security involves availability, access, utilization, and stability. In this commentary, we will discuss food utilization, its public health implications, and how policies can help shape the utilization of food.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 seeks solutions to end food insecurity in all its forms by 2030 (FAO, 2021). Achieving this goal will mean that everyone, everywhere, and at any time has enough food both in quality and quantity to lead a healthy life [1].

## Public Health and Food Security

Food utilization is the component of food security that involves dietary intake and absorption of its nutrients. Food storage and preparation, choices, and hygiene are all aspects of food utilization that affect health. The building components of the body essentially depend on the food we eat. It is built from various nutrients including carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, vitamins, and minerals. The type of food, quality, and frequency of consumption play a critical role. Adequate food consumption makes the body able to withstand diseases and can be referred to as, a public health prevention measure of disease. Diseases and health problems such as cardiovascular diseases, food poisoning, diabetes, hypertension, nutrient deficiencies, and others impact our health tremendously following poor food utilization. Inappropriate food utilization is a global health problem and unless it is identified and policies directed to provide solutions, the burden of the associated diseases will continue to rise. Food poisoning,

which has a rapid onset, is commonplace in resource-limited settings, though it is a worldwide problem. This has affected and led to the death of many. Resource-limited settings suffer from the double burden of diseases and inadequate food utilization is implicated in both scenarios. The double burden of malnutrition is the co-existence of undernutrition and overweight/obesity or other non-communicable diseases associated with food utilization as stated by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This is a serious problem globally, including in high-income countries [2]. The study carried out in the US, identified factors associated with low high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL cholesterol). Some of the risk factors of low HDL cholesterol are modifiable and related to lifestyle. Consumption of saturated fats and large amounts of carbohydrates results in poor health outcomes [3].

Measures to improve food utilization should consider education on nutrition, household nutritional practices, food safety, post-harvest handling, gender, other interventions like adequate sanitation, and water supply. Nutritionally vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children, refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), should be prioritized. Not identifying these aspects to improve food utilization and implementing them will lead to a situation where we have an increased burden of diseases. This will have a negative impact on the economy and society.

## Conclusion

Poor food utilization is a serious public health problem worldwide, compromising the health of many. Collaboration between different sectors is required to tackle food utilization issues. Active and effective food safety agencies should be implemented across communities. Continuous nutrition education should be incorporated in various school programs and national health events. Research should be amplified on food utilization considering culture and environment.

## References

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