

# Food supplements have little effect on the weight of malnourished children

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Providing energy dense food supplements within a general household food distribution has little effect on the weight of children at risk of malnutrition

Giving energy dense [food supplements](#)— Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food (RUSF), a lipid-based nutrient supplement—to young children in addition to a general food distribution in a country with food shortages (Chad) did not reduce levels of wasting (low weight for height, a sign of acute undernutrition) but slightly increased their height and haemoglobin levels according to a study conducted by the international non-governmental organization Action Against Hunger-France (ACF-France) in collaboration with [European researchers](#) published in this week's [PLOS Medicine](#).

In emergency situations, international aid organizations support affected populations by distributing food and sometimes by also providing nutritional supplements such as RUSF, to children at risk of malnutrition. In a cluster randomized controlled trial, researchers from Belgium and France, led by Lieven Huybregts from Ghent University in Belgium, investigated the effect of a targeted daily dose of RUSF in 6

**More information:** Huybregts L, Hougbe´ F, Salpe´teur C, Brown R, Roberfroid D, et al. (2012) The Effect of Adding Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food to a General Food Distribution on Child Nutritional Status and Morbidity: A Cluster-Randomized Controlled Trial. PLoS Med 9(9): e1001313. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001313](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001313)

Perspective article: Dewey KG, Arimond M (2012) Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplements: How Can They Combat Child Malnutrition? PLoS Med 9(9): e1001314. [doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1001314](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001314)

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