

Quitting smoking may lead to a lower risk of household food insecurity

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When a tobacco user quits smoking, their household is less likely to experience food insecurity in the following year, according to a new study from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health (SPH)

published in *Annals of Epidemiology*.

Food insecurity and tobacco use both rank as major threats to U.S. [public health](#), and both have an inequitable impact on [low-income households](#) and people of color. While about 10% of all U.S. households are food insecure, roughly 32% of households below the [poverty line](#) experienced some food insecurity in 2021.

Similarly, people who face social disadvantage are more likely to smoke cigarettes due to a range of factors, including aggressive marketing by the [tobacco industry](#) to low-income groups and neighborhoods with majority Black residents and uneven access to cessation resources. For instance, approximately 20% of adults with a [household income](#) under \$35,000 smoke cigarettes, while in households earning over \$100,000, only 6% of adults smoke.

To conduct the study, SPH researchers used data from the Current Population Survey, a monthly survey of U.S. households run by the federal government. Of the 71,278 adults studied, 82% were non-smokers, 2% were recent quitters, and 16% were continuing smokers. After adjusting for demographic characteristics and household composition, the study found:

- Compared with those who had recently quit smoking, continuing smokers had 1.85 times the risk of household food insecurity.
- The probability of food insecurity was 20% for continuing smokers and 11% for recent quitters.

"We aimed to explore if tobacco cessation could improve [food security](#)," says lead author Kaitlyn Berry, a Ph.D. candidate at SPH.

"Tobacco is expensive, and it's also addictive; in the U.S., on average, a pack of cigarettes currently costs about \$8—\$240 per month for a pack-

a-day smoker. This means that when someone quits smoking, they can save a lot of money that could instead be used for other expenses. Our study shows that quitting smoking leads to a lower risk of household [food insecurity](#), and it points to a new avenue for promoting food security—increasing access to evidence-based smoking cessation interventions."

Based on their findings, the authors suggest that government and non-profit food assistance programs could make promoting cigarette-cessation strategies a component of their assistance. For instance, they could connect smokers to various interventions and treatments, like tobacco-use quit lines, cessation medications and behavioral therapy.

More information: Kaitlyn M. Berry et al, Impact of smoking cessation on household food security, *Annals of Epidemiology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2023.01.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2023.01.007)

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