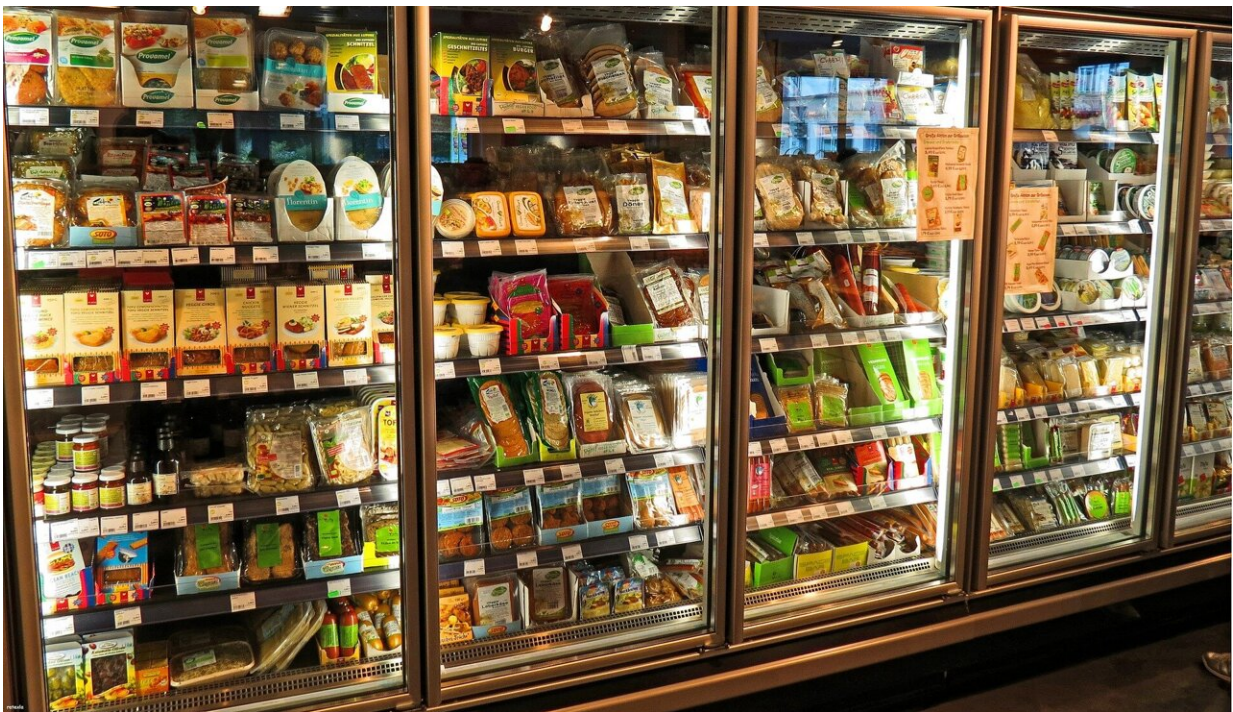


Many Americans faced food insufficiency following discontinuation of pandemic-related benefits, study finds

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The recent discontinuation of pandemic-related food assistance benefits, known as the Supplemental Food Assistance Program (SNAP) Emergency Allotments, led to a substantial increase in food insufficiency in the United States, according to a new study led by

researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

The primary goal of SNAP, which distributes cash-like benefits to [low-income families](#) to buy food, is to combat food insecurity, [which affects 10% of U.S. households](#). The findings were published in *JAMA Health Forum*.

Comparing trends in food insufficiency in states that ended Emergency Allotments before the federal government ended them altogether in March 2023 with the rest of the U.S., the researchers found that after the temporary increases to households' SNAP benefits ended, SNAP recipients experienced a 21% relative increase in both food insufficiency and food insufficiency among children. These findings imply that more than two million more American households faced food insufficiency when Emergency Allotments ended in all states.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food insecurity refers to the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. Food insufficiency is a more severe condition than food insecurity and measures whether a household generally has enough to eat.

"To our knowledge, this is one of the first studies to evaluate the association between changes in SNAP benefit amounts and food insufficiency," said Aaron Richterman, MD, MPH, an Instructor of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Penn and the study's lead author. "This study shows the severe consequences of reducing SNAP benefit amounts at a time when inflation was causing rapid rises in [food prices](#), and is especially important because of upcoming federal negotiations surrounding SNAP's renewal in the Farm Bill at the end of September."

In addition to [influencing chronic diseases](#) like [high blood pressure](#), [heart disease](#), and diabetes, previous [research](#) found that mothers with [school-aged children](#) who face severe hunger are 56.2 percent more likely to have [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) and 53.1% more likely to have severe depression.

Research has found that diet-related illness increased the risk for [severe symptoms](#) and death from COVID-19, [with nearly two-thirds of COVID-19](#) hospitalizations in the U.S. were related to obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart failure.

Penn researchers analyzed data from more than 3 million survey respondents in the U.S. to assess the impact of losing the SNAP Emergency Allotment benefits. They focused on what happened in 18 states that discontinued the additional benefits earlier than other states in the U.S. by letting their formal public health emergency declarations expire.

"SNAP's Emergency Allotments represented the largest-ever increases in benefit amounts for SNAP households," added co-author Harsha Thirumurthy, Ph.D., a professor of Health Policy at Penn. "Our findings are particularly concerning given previous research linking [food insecurity](#) to numerous poor health outcomes. Reducing SNPA benefit amounts will have far-reaching consequences for public health."

Provided by Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania

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