

# Food Insecurity Among WIC-Enrolled Pregnant Women

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## Purpose:

Assess food insecurity among WIC-enrolled pregnant women participating in the longitudinal *Birth to Three – Cavity Free* study, a trial of an intervention to improve care behaviors and reduce early childhood caries (ECC).

## Methods:

This secondary analysis included 634 survey responses. Food insecurity was assessed using a validated questionnaire. Baseline demographics and maternal behaviors were compared by food insecurity status using two-sample t-tests for continuous variables and chi-square or Fisher's exact tests for categorical variables. All tests were two-sided, and p-values are reported for descriptive purposes only.

## Results:

Participants had a mean age of 26.98 years (SD = 5.67). Overall, 43% reported worrying about food not lasting through the month, and 35.0% reported that food did not last. Compared to those who never experienced food insecurity, participants reporting food insecurity were significantly more likely to be pregnant for the first time (49% vs. 32%,  $P < .001$ ), unemployed (31% vs. 23%), have very low income (<\$5,000: 26% vs. 18%,  $P = .005$ ), exhibit less predictable eating patterns (75% vs. 66%,  $P = .027$ ), consume fewer daily meals ( $\geq 3$  meals/day: 53% vs. 66%,  $P = .001$ ), and eat breakfast less frequently ( $\geq 5$  times/week: 39% vs. 58%,  $P = 0.004$ ).

## Conclusion:

Food insecurity among WIC-enrolled pregnant women was common and associated with socioeconomic disadvantage and suboptimal eating behaviors. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions that address food access, promote consistent meal patterns, and integrate oral health support during pregnancy to benefit both mothers and their infants.

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