

# Health Trends in Early Childhood

December 2025



## Nutrition Matters in Young Children



### Trend

47 million people face hunger in the U.S. - including **13 million children**.

Infants and toddlers face the **highest poverty rates** of any age group, with more than a third living in families struggling to meet basic needs.



### Explanation

**Hunger in America is a crisis.**

There are well-established links between food insecurity and poor child health and behavioral outcomes at every age.

Hunger and health are deeply connected. Adequate access to healthy meals is critical to child development and success in school. Food insecurity affects child development.



### Impact

Infancy and early childhood are periods of rapid growth and development, and nutrition plays a vital role. Healthy food supports brain development and supports optimal growth and development.

Starting healthy nutrition routines early in life can establish habits that promote health and prevent chronic diseases.



### Action

Support quality early childhood nutrition in ECE programs.

Follow the **High-Impact Obesity Prevention Standards** (HIOPS) to improve nutrition.

Apply the **family meal concept**.

Access quality nutrition education resources.

### Resources

- [Nibbles for Health: Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children | Food and Nutrition Service](#)
- [ABCs of Growing Healthy Kids – Family Resources – Better Kid Care](#)
- [Early Child Nutrition: Advancing Health for Everyone | Early Care and Education | CDC](#)

Learn more at  
[www.pakeys.org/HealthTrends](http://www.pakeys.org/HealthTrends)

This is the most updated information at release time. The information in Health Trends is not a Pennsylvania regulatory requirement for early childhood providers. Pennsylvania early childhood providers with questions about regulatory requirements should contact their Cert rep or the Bureau of Certification.

