While data indicate a reduction in food insecurity with SNAP participation,

**OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the study was to qualitatively explore food-related decision patterns among SNAP recipients in Mississippi. Specifically, this study aimed to explore food-related decision patterns, barriers and strategies related to healthy eating, and perceptions of healthy eating.

**METHODS**

- Focus groups (n=18) were conducted with 127 low-income female caregivers of children under the age of 18.
- The health belief model was used as a guide to assess food-related decision patterns.
- Cluster sampling was used to randomly recruit participants from the four regional divisions of Mississippi State University Extension.
- Audio recorded focus groups were transcribed verbatim and coded by two independent coders using thematic analysis.

**RESULTS**

Drivers of Food Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Persuasibility</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Barriers to Healthy Eating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Drivers of Food Selection

- Relevance
- Perceptions of Healthy Eating
- Strategies for Healthier Eating
- Food selection and preparation strategies
- Hunger cues and portion sizes
- Difficulty
- Lifestyle change
- Eating out

**REFERENCES**


**CONCLUSIONS**

- SNAP participants in Mississippi report a variety of strategies for managing food costs and striving for healthier eating, while also reporting barriers.
- Upon evaluating study findings against the health belief model used to guide data collection, variability in level perceived threat, perceived benefits and barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy among focus group participants suggests lack of consensus.
- Focusing on ways to manage costs of healthy foods, honor taste preferences, and work within lifestyle/family contexts may enhance efforts to support healthy eating in this audience.
- Means of intervening to address desirability of behavior and social norms are poorly understood. Future research that explores ways to improve desirability of healthy eating and to enhance perceptions that healthy eating is "normal" are warranted.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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