

The conversations around health-focused food subsidies also highlights that the barriers to healthy food are largely financial. "Food security is a money issue," Nguyen says. "If you have the money, you can get healthy food." While food deserts are important issues, they're not the primary hurdle—and research shows that simply adding grocery stores doesn't increase people's consumption of healthy food or their health. "It's not to say access isn't an issue, but often times in low income communities, it's not the main thing," she says.

Food prescription and subsidy programs that lower costs, though, can help, and are designed to stop healthcare problems and costs from ever appearing. "If our social structures aren't aligned to support people meeting their basic needs to support health, we've chosen to pay for it in other ways. And then we have worse health outcomes," Nguyen says.

In other words, if we're worried about high blood sugar, food interventions might be a better bet than doctors visits and high-tech medicine. If we're focused on making sure people are getting their blood sugar levels checked regularly, she says, it's already too late. "Access to healthcare isn't going to really stop the source."