

The New WIC Way: Foods and Focus
Health Care Providers
Fact Sheet, Rev. April 2010

In August 2009, the focus of the WIC Program nationally shifted from prevention of nutrient deficiencies to 1) more promotion and support for long-term breastfeeding and 2) prevention of overweight/obesity and other chronic diseases. Changes in the WIC foods and the focus of services, as published in the *Interim Rule* in the Federal Register, December 6, 2007, were based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, a 2005 Institute of Medicine report entitled *WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change*, and recommendations by professional organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics.

New WIC Foods

- 100% whole grain bread, whole wheat tortillas, soft corn tortillas, or brown rice for women and children;
- Fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, and canned) for women and children;
- Baby fruits and vegetables (and meats for fully breastfed infants) starting at 6 months of age;
- Soy beverages beginning in November, 2010.



Changes in WIC Foods

- ONLY whole milk for children 12 through 23 months of age;
- Low fat (1%) and fat free (skim) milk for children age 2-4 years and women. Whole milk will be available ONLY when medically necessary for a qualifying health condition (see "Prescription-Required" section on the next page). Reduced fat (2%) is an option for 6 months only.
- Canned legumes as alternatives to dried legumes;
- No cheese, except for breastfeeding mothers whose infants receive no formula from WIC.

Changes in Quantities

- More foods for breastfeeding women and women pregnant with multiples;
- Less infant formula for partially breastfed and older infants;
- No formula for breastfed babies in the first month (to protect milk supply) unless a careful and complete assessment at WIC finds a valid reason for one can powder;
- Different quantities of infant formula to better match amounts recommended during their first year of life (e.g., less formula starting at 6 months of age when baby foods are provided);
- Less eggs, juice, and milk for women and children;

- Reminder: WIC is supplemental and does NOT provide all the food (or formula) a WIC participant needs.

Changes in "Prescription-Required" Products and the Prescription Process

- Combinations of formulas/medical foods and all the regular WIC foods are allowed for women and children with qualifying medical conditions;
- Whole milk for children age 2-4 years old and women is allowed ONLY with a prescription for an allowable medical condition;
- Prescriptions for WIC-approved products must include the medical condition (not a symptom such as constipation, colic, inadequate weight gain), amount per day, and if regular foods are to be delayed and/or if the assessment regarding additional foods is to be delegated to the WIC RD;
- New WIC prescription forms and formulas/medical references are available from local WIC agencies and are posted on the WIC web site.

Major Changes in the Focus of Services

- Increased prenatal anticipatory guidance and postpartum breastfeeding support by trained WIC staff including breastfeeding peer counselors;
- Increased education on the selection of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains;
- Increased focus on overweight/obesity prevention;
- Increased education that is reinforced by the new WIC foods, related policies, and services: i.e., "eat more fruits and vegetables;" "lower saturated fat;" "increase whole grains and fiber;" "drink less sweetened beverages and juice;" and "babies are meant to be breastfed."

Potential Changes in the Future

- USDA accepted comments on the Interim Rule until February 1, 2010. (There is no projected date for a Final Rule as this time.)
- Examples of comments from Wisconsin are: Allow children 12-23 months to receive lower fat milk, allow soy milk for children without a prescription, allow infants 6-11 months using standard formula (not just exempt) who cannot consume regular baby foods to receive more formula, and increase the fruit and vegetable cash value voucher amounts from \$6 to \$8/month for children and from \$10 to \$12/month for fully breastfeeding women.

Wisconsin WIC Program Information and Materials

- For information about the Wisconsin WIC Program, prescription forms, fact sheets, Food List, etc., go to <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic>.

