

New WIC Food Packages Coming in 2009: How the Medical Community Can Help

Up-to-date Information on the Connecticut WIC Program for the Health Care Professional

Nutrition Messages of the New WIC Food Packages:

Women/Infants

- Breastfeed
- Begin infant cereal and other complimentary foods at 6 months

Women/Children

- Switch to lower-fat milk (All WIC participants age 2 and older)
- Eat whole grain breads and cereals
- Eat more vegetables and fruits
- Start juice after 1 year of age. Drink less juice.

It's Time For a Change...

WIC, or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children is 35 years old. In 1974 when the program began, the foods selected were rich in 5 target nutrients known to be lacking in the diets of the WIC population - vitamins A and C, calcium, iron, and protein. The last significant change made to the WIC food packages occurred in 1992 when the package provided for exclusively breastfeeding women was expanded. Under pressure by health advocates and the growing need to offer culturally-appropriate foods, USDA contracted with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to review the food packages to better align with infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and current Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

Recommendations were made to include vegetables, fruits, and food items rich in whole grains to address the nation's overweight and obesity issues. The short duration of breastfeeding was targeted by increasing the benefits that breastfeeding mother-infant pairs receive. These changes provide more flexibility and the ability for WIC nutritionists to tailor food packages according to a participant's nutrition assessment, personal preference and cultural eating habits.

The Connecticut WIC Program's implementation date for the USDA Revised WIC Food Package Interim Rule has changed from July 1st to **October 1, 2009. Notable additions to the WIC Food Packages include:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding mothers and their babies will receive more foods than any other category. Fish options for exclusively breastfeeding mothers are expanded to include canned salmon and sardines. Baby food meats are added at 6 months for exclusively breastfed infants. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby food vegetables and fruits for infants over 6 months old. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables and fruits added for children and women participants. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New whole grain items: whole wheat or whole grain bread, whole wheat or soft corn tortillas, brown rice, and barley for children and women participants. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soy-based beverage (soymilk) and tofu will be options as an alternative to milk for women. These options are available to children (1-5 years) with qualifying conditions and medical documentation. |

In order to accommodate these healthier additions, some of the other WIC foods had their quantities reduced:

- Amounts of milk, eggs, juice and cheese are reduced for women and children. Juice is eliminated from infant packages entirely.
- Quantities of formula for older infants are reduced to allow for the addition of complimentary foods to their package.



New WIC Food Packages Provide Consistency

One goal of the revised WIC Food Packages is to provide greater consistency with current science, government nutrition recommendations, AAP's infant feeding practice guidelines and public health nutrition-related issues.



For starters, the addition of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains reinforces the 2005 DGA recommendations. Reductions in certain foods — milk, juice, and eggs — are also more consistent with the DGAs and with WIC's role as a *supplemental* nutrition program. The new WIC Food Packages provide less saturated fat and cholesterol, more fiber, and more vegetables and fruits, and encourage exclusive breastfeeding — all important public health nutrition messages. Low-fat milk will now be the only option (unless medically contraindicated) for women and children over the age of 2 years—helping WIC families limit their saturated fat intake. Cash-value checks (CVC) for vegetables and fruits will allow the purchase of fresh, frozen or canned produce year-round. Increased foods, along with on-going support for breastfeeding mother-infant pairs will provide stronger incentives for increased duration of breastfeeding.

Secondly, WIC will now delay the introduction of complimentary foods to infant participants from the current practice of four months to six months of age. The revised Food Package also modifies the amounts of formula provided to older infants based on age and introduction of complimentary foods in order to encourage a more varied infant diet. Infant vegetables and fruits are added at 6 months, and juice is eliminated in order to promote healthy dietary patterns.

Lastly, States have more options to provide foods appealing to WIC's culturally diverse populations. Foods such as tortillas (whole wheat and soft corn), brown-rice, soy-based beverage (soymilk), tofu, canned fish, and the variety of vegetables and fruits will help WIC families select more culturally appropriate foods.

Overview of Infant Food Packages

Fully breastfed infants (BF) Mother receives breastfeeding assessment, support, and follow-up.	
0-5 mos	Infant receives breast milk.
6-11 mos	Infant receives breast milk, infant cereal, vegetables, fruits, and infant meats.

Partially breastfed infants (BF/FF) Mother receives breastfeeding assessment to customize formula amounts provided, in addition to on-going support and follow-up.	
0-1 mo	Infant receives breast milk and 1 can of powdered infant formula.
1-3 mos	Infant receives breast milk, an amount of formula not to exceed half of the 1-3 month FF infant package.
4-5 mos	Infant receives breast milk, an amount of formula not to exceed half of the 4-5 month FF infant package.
6-11 mos	Infant receives breast milk, an amount of formula not to exceed half of the 6-11 month FF infant package, infant cereal, vegetables, and fruits.

Fully formula fed infants (FF) Mother receives guidance on infant feeding recommendations and follow-up.	
0-3 mos	Infant receives formula only. (10 cans of powdered* infant formula per month)
4-5 mos	Infant receives formula only. (11 cans of powdered infant formula per month)
6-11 mos	Infant receives 8 cans of powdered formula, infant cereal, vegetables, and fruits.

* Powdered physical form of formula is used as example in this table. Corresponding reconstituted amounts of liquid concentrate are also available.