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Dear Health Care Provider:

Exciting changes are coming to the Women, Infants and Children Nutrition (WIC) Program that will affect many of your patients. Beginning on October 1, 2009, WIC will issue checks for new foods, in addition to those already provided to WIC participants, and the program will modify the amounts of some foods to align with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines and with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. With these changes come new procedures related to infants and children with special needs to better coordinate patient care between WIC staff and the participant’s healthcare provider. This letter provides information to assist you with these changes.

Background

Following an extensive nutritional review and public comment period, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) revised WIC regulations in 2007 to implement the first comprehensive revision of WIC foods since the program began. The changes in WIC foods are intended to improve the nutrition and health status of WIC participants and to be consistent with nutrition education and dietary advice. The regulations add new foods and reduce the amounts of several that are currently provided. The table below lists the current WIC foods that will continue, as well as the new foods:

CURRENT WIC FOODS	ADDITIONAL NEW FOODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk, eggs and cheese • 100% fruit and vegetable juice • Beans and peanut butter • Iron-fortified cereals • Iron-fortified infant formula • Tuna, carrots (for breastfeeding women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits and vegetables • Whole wheat breads and whole grains • Soy beverages and tofu • Canned sardines and salmon (for breastfeeding women) • Baby food fruits and vegetables



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Breastfeeding Incentives and Support

Especially positive are changes to encourage mothers to breastfeed their infants. Exclusively breastfeeding women will receive the largest variety and quantity of WIC foods. To support breastfeeding, WIC will not automatically provide formula in the baby's first month to mothers who are breastfeeding unless there are health-based reasons to provide formula. This new policy is important because research shows that mothers need at least four weeks of exclusively breastfeeding to develop a full milk supply for successful breastfeeding.

WIC staff is trained to help a WIC mother through these early weeks, but we need your help to reassure new mothers and honor their decision to breastfeed. Your referrals to WIC for breastfeeding support are invaluable as is your reassurance to mothers that:

- breastfeeding is a normal process;
- it is normal for newborn infants to sleep often and for brief periods; and
- babies cry for many reasons other than hunger.

A local WIC contact is available to assist you in identifying lactation consultants and support for your patients.

Changes in Formula Amounts and Foods for Infants

For infants who are formula fed or who receive both breastmilk and formula, there are changes as well. Formula amounts will fluctuate over the course of the year to meet the infant's nutritional needs and support appropriate introduction of solids as follows:

Age of Infants	Amount of Formula	
	Formula Fed	Combination Fed*
0-3 mos	9 cans powder	Up to 4 cans powder
4-5 mos	10 cans powder	Up to 5 cans powder
6-12 mos	7 cans powder	Up to 4 cans powder

*Combination – providing at least half of the infant's nutritional needs with breastmilk.

WIC will continue to offer concentrate formula in amounts equivalent to the powdered form. To align with AAP guidelines, WIC will no longer provide juice to infants, but will provide all babies 6 months and older with baby food fruits and vegetables. Fully breastfed infants will receive infant meats in addition to fruits and vegetables. We are confident you will welcome these changes as beneficial in making WIC consistent with the guidance that you provide parents.

Infants and Children with Special Needs

Under the new regulations, infants and children with special needs will be able to receive all WIC foods not contraindicated by their healthcare provider, in addition to the therapeutic formula products they receive through their health plan or the WIC Program. To make the process easier for healthcare providers, we have worked with representatives from the medical community to revise WIC's Pediatric Referral Form by adding a section for Special Dietary Requests (See Attachment). This form may be accessed from our website. We encourage you to begin using the new form now.

New Requirement: While soy beverage and tofu will be options for WIC participants, the federal regulations require WIC to notify and receive approval from a child's healthcare provider to issue checks for soy beverage or tofu, even if the reason is cultural preference. The new Pediatric Referral Form includes a check box for this purpose.

Resources

- A WebEx seminar, "WIC Food Changes for Medical and Nursing Care Providers" will be presented on August 26, 2009 between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. To register for this webinar, please go to www.calwic.org and click on the Events Menu to reach the link to "Food Package Webinars".
- A copy of this letter and other information about WIC and these changes are on our Health Professionals web page:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Pages/HealthProfessionals.aspx>
(Revised 09/16/2009)
- You can access the revised WIC Pediatric Referral and Dietary Request Form at the WIC website: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Documents/WIC-Forms-CDPH-247A-PediatricReferral.pdf>
- You can locate a Local California Health Jurisdiction Breastfeeding Coordinator at: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/breastfeeding/Documents/MO-LocalHealthJurBFCoord.pdf>
- You can locate further information on the USDA revised WIC regulations - the interim rule on the new WIC food packages and medical documentation at: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Documents/USDA-WIC-FoodPackageRevisions-InterimRule.pdf>

- You can view a two minute YouTube video, “New WIC Requirements”, sponsored by the California WIC Program and AAP, highlighting important WIC changes presented by a past AAP chapter president on our website, www.wicworks.ca.gov under the News & Updates section or here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpxIU5GZq7U>
(Revised 09/16/2009)
- You may locate a WIC Contact in your area by going to: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Documents/WIC-MDNetwork-Contacts.pdf>. A WIC contact can assist you with additional questions and issues that may occur as you transition to these new WIC changes.
- Finally, if you have further questions regarding the new WIC foods or other WIC requirements, please write us at MD-WIC@cdph.ca.gov or call Barbara Longo, MS, RD, Chief of the WIC Program Evaluation and Policy Branch at 916-928-8870.

We welcome questions and comments from you and your staff during this transition.

Sincerely,



Linnea E. Sallack, MPH, RD, Chief
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