

Check it out!

Update for Vendors



WIC is about good nutrition

The **Women, Infants and Children Program**—better known as WIC—serves over 1.4 million mothers and children a month in California. It is a nationwide nutrition program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and you help make it work.

As part of the vendor community, you are an important link to providing better nutrition and promoting good health for pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and young children. In fact, women who participate in WIC have healthier pregnancies and babies. The nutritious foods provided through WIC also help their children grow strong with fewer health and/or learning problems.

Who qualifies for WIC?

WIC participants must live in California, meet income requirements based on federal guidelines, and have a nutritional need. Many working families qualify for WIC.

Eligible WIC participants:

- Women who are pregnant
- Women who are breastfeeding
- Women who have recently given birth
- Infants (under one year of age)
- Children (have had their first birthday but have not reached their fifth birthday)

Authorized WIC shoppers:

- WIC participants
- Parents, guardians, and foster parents with custody of qualifying children
- Alternate or substitute shoppers, who are designated by WIC participants.

WIC Program Goals

The WIC Program's purpose is to prevent health problems and to improve the program participants' health during critical times of growth and development. WIC has the following goals for promoting good health:

- Decrease the complications of pregnancy
- Prevent iron deficiency anemia and obesity
- Prevent low birth weight infants
- Promote optimum growth and development of infants and young children
- Promote breastfeeding

Steps to success

Understanding how to redeem WIC food instruments (FIs) makes the process easier for everyone involved. This document walks you through the steps and provides helpful information. If you ever have questions, contact your WIC Vendor Consultant directly or call (916) 928-8705.

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Know what foods are WIC authorized



ALLOWED FOODS

- Milk
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Cereal
- Juice
- Peanut Butter
- Beans/Peas/Lentils
- Infant Cereal
- Infant Formula
- Carrots
- Tuna

The WIC Authorized Food List (WAFL) and WIC Shopping Guide are handy references. These publications are available at the WIC website (www.wicworks.ca.gov). The WAFL contains a complete list of foods participants can and cannot buy. It is helpful to read it carefully before processing WIC FIs.

The WIC Shopping Guide shows pictures of allowed WIC foods for easy identification, and it is the same guide

WIC participants use when they shop.

WIC participants **must purchase** the full amount of the specific infant formula or infant cereal printed on the WIC FI. They **can only buy** authorized name brands and certain store brands of hot and cold cereals. Any brand is okay when WIC participants buy milk, eggs, cheese, peanut butter, dried beans/peas/lentils, carrots and tuna.

WIC ID Folder

Identify participants or alternates by the WIC Identification (ID) Folder

WIC participants receive a WIC Identification (ID) Folder/WIC Authorization Folder when they get their first packet of WIC FIs. WIC participants or alternate shoppers must present a signed WIC ID Folder at the cash register during a WIC purchase in order to redeem WIC FIs.



- ✓ A WIC participant must present a signed WIC ID Folder.
- ✓ Do not ask for any other identification or record any participant information contained in the WIC ID Folder.
- ✓ After you enter the purchase price, the WIC participant **must sign the WIC FI at the cash register.**
- ✓ Then match the signature on the WIC FI with the signature on the WIC ID Folder.

- 1 Participant
- 2 Alternate Shopper



How to process a WIC FI

INDIVIDUAL NO.	PARTICIPANT / PARENT / GUARDIAN	FIRST DAY TO USE	LAST DAY TO USE	SERIAL NO.
434705811IP	IVETTE PARTICIPANT	NOV 10 06	DEC 10 06	012345678

Kind to buy:
 *MILK-COW, FLUID PASTEURIZED (GALLONS ONLY)
 *CHEESE-CHEDDAR, JACK, AMERICAN, MOZZARELLA IN 0.75 LB (12 OZ) OR LARGER
 *EGGS-AA WHITE, SM, MED, LG

How much to buy: UP TO:
 2 GALLONS MILK; 2 DOZ EGGS (DOZENS ONLY) 2 LBS CHEESE

EXACT PURCHASE PRICE:

WIC PROGRAM State of California
 VALID FOR WIC APPROVED FOOD ONLY.
 VOID IF NOT DEPOSITED WITHIN 45 DAYS OF "FIRST DAY TO USE." NOT VALID IF ALTERED.

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE (SIGN AT PURCHASE)

Serial number: 01234567890

The serial number is the last ten digits located at the bottom of the food instrument.

- 1 **Pay to the order of** Each WIC FI is payable to any "WIC Authorized Vendor".
- 2 **First day to use/Last day to use** Carefully check the dates on the WIC FI to make sure the WIC FI is redeemed within the valid time period.
- 3 **Kind to buy** Match the type and brand of foods selected by the participant with the WIC-approved foods printed on the WIC FI. Sell only the correct WIC-approved foods.
- 4 **How much to buy** Compare the quantity (size and amounts) of WIC-approved foods selected with what is printed on the WIC FI.
- 5 **Must not exceed maximum allowable reimbursement rate** The maximum allowable reimbursement rate is the maximum reimbursement rate that a vendor can be reimbursed for transacting and redeeming an FI. The WIC FI does not provide the "Must Not Exceed" dollar amount. Instead, it has pound signs (i.e., #####).
- 6 **Exact purchase price** Write the exact cost of the WIC-approved foods in this area. Write the amount in ink in front of the participant and before the participant signs the WIC FI.
- 7 **Authorized signature** Ask the participant for the WIC ID Folder and check to see if it is signed. If the WIC ID Folder is not signed, inform the WIC participant or alternate shopper that the WIC ID Folder is not valid without a signature. If the WIC ID Folder is signed, have the WIC participant sign the WIC FI in your presence after the Exact Purchase Price has been entered on the WIC FI. Compare and match the signatures.
- 8 **Serial number submission and FI deposit guidelines** Before you deposit the FIs, you must submit the serial number for each FI using one of three options – (1) Telephone submission option (1-888-942-4942), (2) Vendor WIC Information eXchange (VWIX) website submission option (www.vwix.ca.gov), or (3) Electronic file submission option. The serial number is a ten-digit number located on the bottom of the FI. We recommend that vendors confirm that the submission was accepted by WIC before depositing the FIs. You may confirm the submission either through the VWIX website or by calling the WIC Technical Support line at 1-800-224-7472.

WIC FIs must be deposited into the bank within 45 days from the "FIRST DAY TO USE" printed on the FIs. Make sure to endorse each FI with a written signature, store stamp, or cash register stamp before depositing it into the bank.

Pay attention when processing WIC FIs



WIC participants **do not have to buy** the full amount of WIC foods if "UP TO" is printed on the WIC FI. Honor the participant's decision to buy less than the full amount of food.

Only stores with a WIC vendor agreement may accept WIC FIs. It is important to process WIC FIs one at a time to reduce errors. There is specific information to review on each FI, so take your time.

Correcting WIC FIs - before depositing into the bank

If the exact purchase price is filled in incorrectly, it is your responsibility to correct the FI before depositing it in the bank. Just follow these accepted bank procedures:

- Draw a single line through the wrong amount.
- Write the correct amount neatly above the lined through amount.
- If the correction is made while the WIC participant or alternate shopper is at the cash register, ask him/her to initial it. Otherwise, have the store manager, owner, or an authorized representative initial the change.
- If the FI has been endorsed with a redeemed amount, draw a line through the wrong amount on the back and write the correct amount next to it.

For information on how to handle rejected WIC FIs, please go to www.wicworks.ca.gov; click on **Grocer Information**; click on **For WIC Vendor News** click here; and then click on **WIC Vendor News – February 2007**.



Stocking requirements

Each store must have on the shelves at all times the inventory amounts in the following chart. Inventory shall include stock on store shelves available for purchase; it shall not include inventory in storage or on order but not delivered. Refer to the WIC Authorized Food List or the California Shopping Guide for a complete list of authorized foods.

<p>Milk:</p> <p>Fresh (9) one gallons and (2) one-half gallons fluid milk</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Canned (18) 12-ounce cans</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Dry 60-ounces</p>	<p>Infant Formula* the option of:</p> <p><i>Concentrate:</i></p> <p>Enfamil LIPIL with Iron (31) 13-ounce cans</p> <p>ProSobee LIPIL (31) 13-ounce cans</p> <p>Or</p> <p><i>Powdered:</i></p> <p>Enfamil LIPIL with Iron (9) 12.9-ounce cans</p> <p>ProSobee LIPIL (9) 12.9-ounce cans</p> <p><small>* You may carry either concentrate or powdered as long as both Enfamil LIPIL with Iron (milk-based) and ProSobee LIPIL (soy-based) are stocked.</small></p>
<p>Cheese 5 pounds of any combination of authorized type and size</p>	<p>Infant cereal (3) 8-ounce boxes of authorized infant cereal</p>
<p>Eggs 4 dozen</p>	<p>Dried beans, peas or lentils 3 pounds of any combination</p>
<p>Carrots 2 pounds</p>	<p>Peanut butter (2) 16 to 18-ounce jars</p>
<p>Juice the option of:</p> <p>Shelf Stable (3) 64-ounce containers of each flavor of authorized juice</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Frozen Concentrate (4) 11.5 or 12-ounce containers of each flavor of authorized juice</p>	<p>Tuna (chunk light packed in water) (4) 6-ounce cans</p> <p>Cereal the option of:</p> <p>Cold At least 2 boxes each of any four authorized cereals</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Hot 4 boxes of one or more authorized cereals</p>

Your shelf inventory must include every type of food group authorized on the WIC Program; however, you do not have to carry every authorized food item.

- You **must** carry **all** the flavors of juice in frozen concentrate **or** all the flavors in shelf stable form.
- You **must** carry **at least one** variety of **Gerber** iron fortified, dry infant cereal without fruit.
- You **must** carry Enfamil LIPIL with Iron in **either** concentrate or powdered.
- You **must** carry ProSobee LIPIL in **either** concentrate or powdered.

Maximum allowable reimbursement rate

How to access maximum allowable reimbursement rate information

The maximum allowable reimbursement rates for each of the 16 vendor peer groups are calculated every two weeks using redemption data for vendors in those particular peer groups for the preceding 12 weeks. Therefore, the maximum allowable reimbursement rates may change every two weeks. Maximum allowable reimbursement rates will be posted on the Vendor WIC Information eXchange (VWIX) secure website every two weeks on Sunday at 12:01 a.m. and become effective the following Friday at 12:01 a.m. This allows vendors five days to review the rates and prepare for any changes. Vendors may access the maximum allowable reimbursement rate information from any of the following ways:

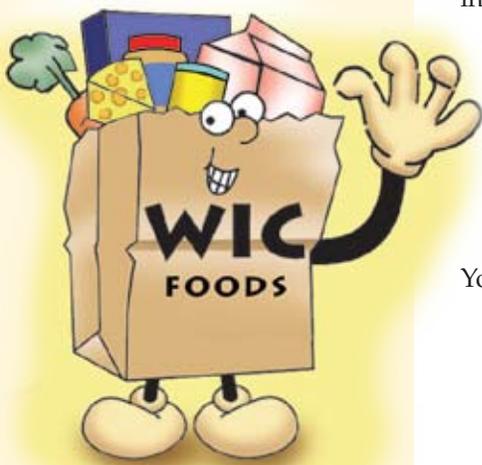
- Go to www.wicworks.ca.gov. Select Grocer Information and click on “Go-to VWIX” and enter your user ID and password;
- Go directly to the VWIX website (www.vwix.ca.gov), and enter your user ID and password;
- Call 1-888-942-4942 (automated phone system) and then enter your user ID and password; or
- Call 1-800-224-7472 (for technical assistance).

Need help with VWIX?

For assistance in using VWIX, submission of serial numbers, or for answers to questions about a specific FI, contact WIC Technical Support. There are two ways in which you may contact WIC Technical Support. If you have a problem that must be addressed immediately, call WIC Technical Support at 1-800-224-7472. WIC Technical Support hours are: Monday through Thursday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturday 8 am to 5 p.m. For non-urgent questions or suggestions, you can e-mail Technical Support at VWIXHelp@cdhp.ca.gov. In your e-mail, please include the following:

- your name,
- your phone number (including area code),
- your VWIX User ID,
- your Vendor ID Number, and
- your message.

You will receive a response within two state business days.



A few reminders about WIC vendor responsibilities

Use of the WIC logo

California WIC reserves the right to limit how the California WIC logo is used by WIC vendors. Your Vendor Agreement outlines the allowable uses of the WIC acronym and logo.

The California WIC Program allows WIC vendors to:

- Use the California WIC logo to identify themselves as authorized by California WIC and assist participants in identifying where they can shop with their FIs (through the use of posters and decals supplied by the WIC program).
- Use the California WIC logo to identify WIC-approved food (through the use of “shelf talkers” supplied by the WIC program).
- Reproduce the California WIC logo in vendor advertisements as outlined in Vendor Alert 2007-10. Vendors are required to follow the specifications detailed in this alert.

Vendors must:

- Keep the California WIC logo intact each time it is reproduced.
- Reproduce the California WIC logo only:
 - in dated, general circulation newspaper ads or inserts that advertise the vendor’s store, or
 - as contained within a participant outreach message with language provided to the vendor and approved by the WIC Program for the vendor to publish.
- Adhere to California WIC logo image specifications as defined in the “Graphics Standards Manual for the California WIC Program’s Authorized Vendors.” This manual is available to download from the VWIX website.

Notifying WIC

As a WIC vendor, you are obligated to notify your WIC Vendor Consultant at least 15 days prior to:

- Selling your store
- Transferring ownership
- Moving your store to another location
- Adding or removing a business partner
- Making a change to a corporate structure
- Making any business changes that may affect a participant’s ability to redeem WIC FIs at your store.

You may contact your WIC Vendor Consultant directly or call (916) 928-8705.



IMPORTANT:

By posting a WIC logo decal or poster in your store window, you are helping WIC participants to identify that your store is authorized to sell WIC foods.

WIC authorizations are nontransferable. New owners must apply for WIC authorization and may not accept WIC FIs until approved.

A few reminders about WIC vendor responsibilities

Training employees

WIC vendors are required to receive non-interactive training (such as reading this newsletter) each year, plus face-to-face interactive training once every three years, to remain authorized. As a WIC vendor, you are held accountable for training and educating your store employees on WIC Program rules. For example, it is your responsibility to:

- Show store employees how to process WIC FIs properly.
- Train store employees about food items authorized by the WIC Program, including changes when they occur.
- Train store employees to treat WIC participants respectfully.
- Make sure store employees never accept cash for WIC purchases.
- Make sure store employees do not allow WIC participants to return WIC items for cash.
- Sell the full amount of infant formula and infant cereal.

Keeping records

Vendors must maintain WIC records for at least three years, including but not limited to: inventory records showing all purchases, wholesale and retail, in the form of original invoices that identify the quantity and prices of specific WIC-approved foods.

Infant formula

Vendors are required to purchase infant formula only from manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, or retailers that have a seller's permit verified through the Board of Equalization and/or infant formula manufacturers registered with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In addition to maintaining invoice records as noted above, vendors are required to retain an additional record for each infant formula invoice documenting that the purchase was from an authorized supplier, in accordance with Vendor Agreement requirements.

The following is a list of companies currently registered with the FDA who manufacture infant formula:

- Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
- Nestle, USA
- SHS North America
- PBM Nutritionals
- Solus Products, LLC
- Mead Johnson and Company



INFANT FORMULA SUPPLIER

The state does not provide a list of wholesalers, distributors, or retailers. It is the responsibility of the vendor to confirm that their formula supplier is approved by the FDA or has a seller's permit number that the vendor has verified through the California Board of Equalization. For additional information, refer to www.wicworks.ca.gov.

Federal and State regulations promote integrity



IMPORTANT:

If a WIC vendor's authorization is terminated as a result of a Food Stamp disqualification, the disqualification from WIC may not be appealed.

The WIC Program monitors WIC authorized vendor stores in three ways:

- Routine monitoring visits
- Compliance buys
- Inventory audits

Regulations are in place to stop vendor-related fraud and abuse in the WIC Program. As a WIC vendor, you can do your part by following WIC rules and contacting your WIC Vendor Consultant with any questions.

Vendor Violations and Sanctions

A WIC Program violation can result in:

- Disqualification
- Imposition of a civil money penalty in lieu of a disqualification.

The disqualification time frames vary according to the specific violation. To obtain additional information regarding vendor violations and sanctions, please refer to your vendor agreement, Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 246.12 (l), and Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations Sections 40740 and 40741.

If you have any questions regarding vendor violations and sanctions, you may contact your WIC Vendor Consultant at (916) 928-8705.

Reciprocal WIC/Food Stamp disqualification

The WIC and Food Stamp Programs are required to notify each other of program violations. As a result:

- If a store is disqualified from WIC, it may also be disqualified from the Food Stamp Program.
- Likewise, if a store is disqualified from the Food Stamp Program, it will be disqualified from WIC (unless the WIC Program determines there is no other store for WIC participants in that shopping area).

The disqualification period for each program must be for the same length of time, but the time periods may differ. For example:

- A WIC disqualification can be from 01-01-05 through 12-31-07 (three years).
- A Food Stamp disqualification can be from 06-01-06 through 05-31-09 (three years).

Federal and State regulations promote integrity

The appeal process

If your store is disqualified from the WIC program, or your application for WIC authorization is denied, you can appeal the decision. You must submit a “Statement of Disputed Issues” to the Office of Administrative Hearings and Appeals through the California Department of Public Health, stating the basis for your disagreement with the disqualification.

The purpose of the administrative appeal process is to give the vendor the opportunity to dispute:

- An adverse action or sanction as a result of compliance investigations or on-site monitoring.
- A sanction from an audit.
- A denied application.

Answers to common questions

Q Can I accept a driver license for identification?

No. You cannot accept a driver’s license or any other form of identification in place of, or in addition to, the WIC ID Folder when redeeming WIC FIs.

Q What if the participant’s or the alternate shopper’s signature is not on the WIC ID Folder?

Return the WIC FIs and WIC ID Folder to the participant or alternate shopper. Politely explain that the WIC ID Folder is invalid without his/her signature.

Q What if a participant or alternate shopper tries to redeem an expired WIC FI?

Stop. Do not proceed with the transaction. Write “VOID” across the expired WIC FI and return it to the participant or alternate shopper. Your store will not get paid for WIC FIs accepted after the “LAST DAY TO USE”.

Q Can I substitute another brand if our store is out of the brand stated on the WIC FI?

No. Substitutions are never allowed for brand-specific WIC-approved food items.

Q If the WIC FI does not state “UP TO”, can a WIC participant buy less food than stated on the WIC FI?”

No. Some WIC FIs, such as those for infant formula and infant cereal, state specific amounts. The WIC participant **must buy the full amount** printed on the face of the FI if the FI does not state “UP TO.”

Q Can a WIC participant buy less food if the WIC FI says “UP TO”?

Yes. When “UP TO” is printed on the FI, WIC participants have the discretion to buy the full amount or to buy less than the full amount.

Q Can a WIC participant pay the difference in cash if the price of a WIC food exceeds the maximum allowable rate?

No. Never accept cash for a WIC purchase even when the shelf price exceeds the maximum allowable rate. You must provide the participant the purchased food and accept the maximum amount if your store’s price exceeds the maximum allowable rate.

Glossary and List of Acronyms of Commonly Used Terms

Alternate Shopper:	A substitute shopper; a person designated by the WIC participant to pick up and use WIC food instruments.
Compliance buy:	A purchase made with food instruments at a vendor store by an undercover Program representative, who poses as a participant, to evaluate the vendor's compliance with state and federal regulations.
First Day of Use:	This is the first day a WIC participant may use a WIC food instrument (check), not before.
Food instrument (FI):	A voucher, check, or coupon used by a WIC participant to obtain WIC-approved foods.
Inventory audit:	The examination of food invoices or other proofs of purchase to determine whether a vendor has purchased sufficient quantities of WIC-approved foods to provide participants the quantities specified on food instruments redeemed by the vendor during a given period of time.
Last Day of Use:	This is the very last day a WIC participant may use a WIC food instrument.
Maximum allowable reimbursement rate:	The maximum rate that a vendor (grocer) will be reimbursed for transacting and redeeming food instruments.
Participants:	Low income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, post-partum women, infants, and children, where applicable, the parents, guardians, caretakers or representatives of these women, infants and children, who have applied for, and are receiving WIC-approved foods under the WIC Program.
Peer Group:	Vendors grouped together based on a set of characteristics that are predictors of the price they charge for a given food item.
Shopping Guide:	A brochure that shows pictures of authorized WIC-approved foods.
USDA:	United States Department of Agriculture – the federal agency that funds and administers the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program of Women, Infants and Children.
Vendor:	A retail store location with a specific ownership (sole proprietorship, partnership, limited liability company, or corporation), the combination of which is authorized or is applying for authorization to participate in the WIC Program. This does not include home food delivery operators.

Glossary (cont.)

Vendor Agreement:	A contract between the State WIC Program and the vendor. This contract is a time-limited agreement and explains in detail the rights and responsibilities of both parties.
Vendor authorization:	The process by which the State agency assesses, selects, and enters into agreements with stores that apply and subsequently reapply to be authorized as vendors.
VWIX:	Vendor WIC Information eXchange, which is a website in which authorized vendors can enter serial numbers for food instruments and check status.
WIC Authorized Food List:	A brochure that contains a detailed list of the food items WIC participants can and cannot buy, which are listed by food type. The brochure also provides the responsibilities of vendors and participants.
WIC Identification (ID) or Authorization Folder:	Local agencies and clinics issue this document/folder to WIC participants when they get their first packet of WIC food instruments (checks). The folder holds the WIC food instruments and it is the only form of identification that the WIC participant is required to present to redeem WIC food instruments for WIC-approved foods.

Check it out!

TIME FOR A CHANGE!

Coming in 2009 – The WIC food packages will be changing to better meet the nutritional needs of our WIC families and appeal to WIC’s culturally diverse population. As a vendor, you are an important link in providing nutritious foods to women, infants and children. That is why we are providing you an advance notice of this upcoming change. More information to come.



WIC is an Equal Opportunity Program.
General Information (toll free): 1-888-WIC-WORKS (1-888-942-9675)
WIC Vendor Consultants: (916) 928-8705 • WIC Website: www.wicworks.ca.gov