

# The New WIC Food Packages

*Time for a change*



# Food Package Beginnings...1974



The WIC food packages were designed to supplement participants' diets with foods rich in five target nutrients known to be lacking in the diets of the WIC target population — **vitamins A and C, calcium, iron and protein.**

# History of WIC Foods

Since 1980, the only significant change made in the WIC food packages occurred in 1992, when the set of foods provided for breastfeeding women was expanded.



# Requests for Change

Over the years USDA received numerous requests to revise the WIC food packages.

- WIC Program administrators
- Medical and scientific communities
- Advocacy groups
- Congress
- WIC Participants

# Why Revise the WIC Food Packages?

Changes have occurred in the major health and nutrition risks faced by WIC's target population, including:

- diets lacking in whole grains and fruit and vegetables
- short duration of breastfeeding
- overweight and obesity



# Why Revise the WIC Food Packages?

A substantial shift in the ethnic composition of the WIC population.



- Hispanics made up 39 percent of the WIC caseload in 2004, up from 21 percent in 1988.
- Asians and Pacific Islanders have become a substantial part of the WIC population in several states over the same period.

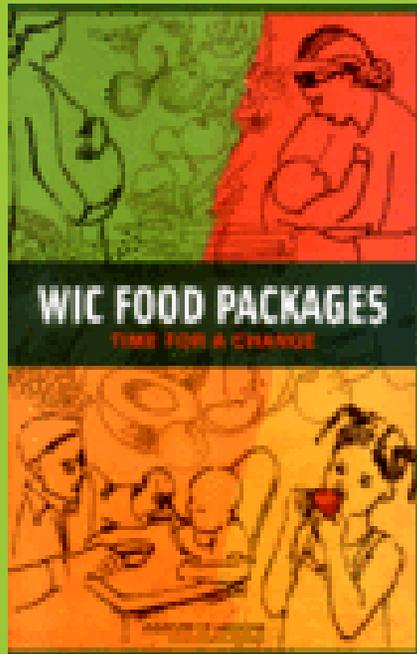
# Review of WIC Food Packages



- USDA contracted with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to independently review the WIC Food Packages.
- USDA charged the IOM with reviewing the nutritional needs of the WIC population, and recommending cost-neutral changes to the WIC food packages.

# Institute of Medicine Recommendations 2005

The Institute of Medicine provided USDA with a sound scientific basis for developing a new set of food packages for the WIC Program.



# Criteria Used to Select the New WIC Food Packages

- ✓ Reduce the prevalence of inadequate and excessive nutrient intakes in participants.
- ✓ Contribute to an overall dietary pattern consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- ✓ Contribute to an overall diet that is consistent with established dietary recommendations for infants and children less than two years of age, including encouragement and support for breastfeeding.

# Criteria Used to Select the New WIC Food Packages

- ✓ Foods are suitable for low-income persons who may have limited transportation, storage, and cooking facilities.
- ✓ Foods are readily acceptable, widely available, and commonly consumed; take into account cultural food preferences; and provide incentives for families to participate in the WIC program.
- ✓ Consideration given to the impacts that changes in the packages will have on vendors and WIC agencies.

# Summary of Major Changes

- Revises infant food packages
- Adds fruits and vegetables
- Adds soy-based beverage and tofu as milk alternatives
- Adds whole grains (cereals, bread, and other whole grains, e.g. tortillas, brown rice)
- Reduces some food allowances, including milk, eggs and juice

# The New WIC Food Packages....

# Reinforce Nutrition Education Messages

“Eat more fruits and vegetables”

“Lower saturated fat”

“Increase whole grains and fiber”

“Drink less sweetened beverages and juice”

“Babies are meant to be breastfed”



# Add Foods to Appeal to Diverse Populations

- Tortillas
- Brown rice and other whole grains
- Soy beverage
- Tofu
- Wide choice of fruits and vegetables for ethnic variety
- Canned salmon, sardines, mackerel



# Revise Food Packages for Infants

- Formula amounts tied to feeding practice and age of infant
- Complementary foods delayed to 6 months
- Juice eliminated
- Baby food fruits and vegetables for infants
- Baby food meat for fully breastfed babies



# Provide Breastfeeding Incentives and Support

New changes in the WIC food packages help WIC more actively promote and support breastfeeding through the food packages provided to participants.



# Provide Breastfeeding Incentives and Support

- Fully breastfeeding mothers receive most variety and largest quantity of food, including \$10 cash-value voucher for fruits and vegetables.
- Fully breastfeeding infants > 6 months receive larger quantities of baby food fruits and vegetables; also baby food meat.



# New Food Packages for Partially Breastfeeding Infants

- Compared to previous food packages, partially breastfed infants receive less infant formula to allow mothers to feed more breast milk to their infants.
- No routine issuance of formula in first month to help mother maintain milk supply.

# Add Fruits and vegetables

- Cash value-vouchers (\$6, \$8, or \$10) for fruits and vegetables for children and women
- Participants may choose from a wide variety of fruits and vegetables
- Fresh, frozen and canned allowed



# Cash-value vouchers for Fruits and vegetables

- For use at authorized grocery stores
- WIC State agencies have the option to authorize farmers at farmers' markets to accept the cash-value voucher



# Add Whole Grains

- Whole wheat or whole grain bread for children and women
- Whole grain options
  - Brown Rice
  - Soft Corn and Whole Grain Tortillas
  - Oatmeal
  - Bulgur
  - Barley



# Require Whole Grain Cereals

At least half of the cereals on a State agency's food list must be whole grain.



# Reduce Juice Allowance for Children and Women

- Reduces quantities of juice for children and women
- Amounts align with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics



# Reduce Milk and Dairy Allowances

Reduces quantities of milk and cheese for children and women to align with 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.



Only Skim or Low-Fat Milk



Only skim or low-fat milk is authorized for women and children > 2 years of age.

# Add New Milk and Dairy Alternatives

- Soy-based beverage\*
- Tofu



\*Medical documentation required for children to receive soy-based beverage and tofu as alternatives to milk.

# Reduce Quantities of Eggs

Reduces quantity of eggs to align with 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.



# Add New Canned Fish for Fully Breastfeeding Women

- Continues to allow canned **light tuna** (no albacore)
- Allows other canned fish identified as lower in mercury
  - **Salmon**
  - **Sardines**
  - **Mackerel**



## Other Changes...Legumes

- Adds legumes (beans or peanut butter) to food package for postpartum women to improve the intake of iron, folate, Vitamin E, and fiber.



- Allows canned beans to be substituted for dried beans for all children and women.

# Continue to Serve Medically Fragile Participants

- Continues to provide exempt infant formula and medical foods
- Now authorizes medically fragile participants to receive other WIC supplemental foods



# State Food Lists

WIC State agencies have flexibility to select foods within the parameters of Federal regulations. For example:

- Specific brands of cereal and juice
- Container/package sizes for milk, cheese
- Policies regarding organic, kosher, specialty foods
- Lower cost options

The changes to the WIC food packages hold potential for improving the nutrition and health of the nation's low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and young children.

*Institute of Medicine, 2005*

# WIC Makes A Difference

*Lifelong Strategies for Healthy Eating*

*Lowered Rates of Anemia*

*Increased Breastfeeding Rates*

*Lowered Infant Mortality Rates*

