

## **Long awaited changes to WIC Food Packages**

by

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Thousands of women and children are eating more fruit, vegetables, and whole grains due to the biggest overhaul of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) since the program was established in 1974. Nutrition recommendations have changed over the years and the new food package offers an opportunity to link nutrition education to foods provided because the foods offered with WIC are now a better fit with Dietary Guidelines and My Pyramid. The updated food packages include fruits and vegetables as well as whole grains, offering WIC clients a wider array of nutrients, phytochemicals and antioxidants, and other compounds that may have beneficial long-term effects on health. The revisions also provide additional benefits and incentives for the breastfeeding dyad, further supporting the long-term health of our participants.

### **New Foods**

One of the biggest changes to the food package is the addition of foods previously not available on the program. For the first time ever, clients are able to buy fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. Through nutrition education clients are instructed on selecting a variety of nutrient dense fruits and vegetables, one of the key recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines.

The Dietary Guidelines also recommends choosing a variety of grains, especially whole grains daily. WIC helps clients meet this recommendation by adding whole grains such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal, whole wheat tortillas and soft corn tortillas. In addition, whole grain cereals are emphasized.

Based on recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics, many changes are occurring in the infant food packages. One of the most noteworthy changes is the complete elimination of juice during the first year and the addition of baby food fruits and vegetables. These complementary foods as well as infant cereal will not be added until the infant is six months of age. Infants who are exclusively breastfed receive more baby fruits and vegetables and receive baby meats. For those infants who receive formula, the amount received each month may vary and will be based on the infants' age. From birth – 3 months a formula fed infant will receive 9 cans, from 4-5 months it goes up to 10 cans, and from 6-12 months it decreases to 7 cans powered Similac Advance Early Shield formula.

### **Other Changes**

In addition to new foods there are several changes to foods on the program, starting with milk. Only skim, 1% or 2% milk will be provided for women and children older than 2 years of age. Children 12-24 months receive whole milk.

Other foods affected by the changes include cheese, eggs and juice. The amount of milk, cheese, eggs and juice received by women and children has decreased and juice was eliminated from the

infant food package. These changes provide WIC clients with a food package lower in saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol which better aligns the WIC food package with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

WIC has always been a strong supporter of breastfeeding. The new food packages provide even greater benefits to women who choose to exclusively breastfeed as well as their infants. Exclusively breastfeeding mothers receive tuna and salmon in addition to greater quantities of certain of other foods.

Here is a comparison between some of the old and new food packages.

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| <p><i>New Standard Child's food Package for children 12 – 24 months of age.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iron fortified cereal – 36 oz</li> <li>▪ Juice – 128 oz</li> <li>▪ Whole Milk – 4 gallon</li> <li>▪ No cheese</li> <li>▪ Eggs – 1 dozen</li> <li>▪ Canned beans – 4 cans</li> <li>▪ Whole grains products – 32 oz</li> <li>▪ Fruit &amp; vegetable check - \$6</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Old Standard Child's food Pkg for child 12 – 24 months of age.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iron-fortified cereal – 36 oz</li> <li>▪ Juice – 192 oz</li> <li>▪ Milk – 5 gallon</li> <li>▪ Cheese – 1 pound</li> <li>▪ Eggs – 2 dozen</li> <li>▪ Dried beans – 1 pound</li> </ul>  |
| <p><i>New Food Packages a for Totally Breastfeeding woman</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iron-fortified cereal – 36 oz</li> <li>▪ Whole grain – 16 oz.</li> <li>▪ Vit.C juice – 144 oz</li> <li>▪ Fruit &amp; vegetables check - \$10</li> <li>▪ Lower fat milk – 6 gallons</li> <li>▪ Cheese – 1#</li> <li>▪ Canned tuna or salmon – 30 oz</li> <li>▪ Eggs – 2 doz.</li> <li>▪ Peanut butter – 18 oz</li> <li>▪ Canned beans - 4 cans beans</li> </ul> | <p><i>Old Food Package for an Exclusively Breastfeeding woman</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iron-fortified cereal</li> <li>▪ Vit. C juice – 336 oz</li> <li>▪ Fresh carrots – 2#</li> <li>▪ Milk 5 ½ gallon</li> <li>▪ Cheese 3#</li> <li>▪ Canned Tuna – 4 cans (26 oz)</li> <li>▪ Eggs – 2 doz.</li> <li>▪ Peanut butter – 18 oz and 1# dried beans</li> </ul> |
| <p><i>New Food Packages for Totally Breastfed Infant over 6 months of age</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infant Cereal – 24 oz</li> <li>▪ Baby Food Fruits and/or Vegetables – 256 oz (64 4-oz jars)</li> <li>▪ Baby Food Meats – 77.5 oz (31 2½-oz jars)</li> </ul>  | <p><i>Old Food Packages for Totally Breastfed Infant over 6 months of age</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infant Cereal – 24 oz</li> <li>▪ Vitamin C Fortified juice – 92 oz</li> </ul>  |

Over all most Kansas WIC clients are very excited about the food package changes and the ability to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables. The State of Kansas started to roll out the new food package August 1, 2009 and the last clients received the new checks on October 30, 2009. Clients who were scheduled to receive their WIC checks at the end of October commented that they could not wait until their WIC appointment so they could receive the new WIC foods!