

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



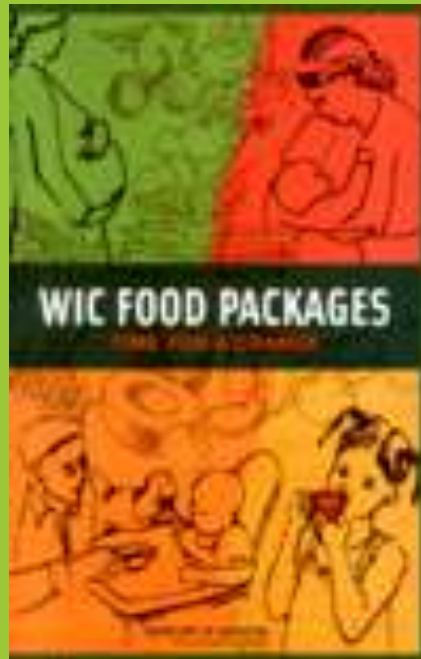
Review of WIC Food Packages



- 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.

The New WIC Food Packages....

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

- 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.



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



Add Whole Grains

- Whole grain bread for children and women
- At least half of the cereals must be whole grain
- Other whole grain options
 - Brown Rice
 - Soft Corn and Whole Grain Tortillas
 - Oatmeal
 - Bulgur
 - Barley



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



Reduces Milk, Cheese, and Eggs

Reduces quantities of milk, cheese and eggs 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.

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 for those without another provider
- Now authorizes medically fragile participants to receive other WIC supplemental foods by prescription



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, cheese, eggs and juice

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



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”



Next Steps

- Continue to gather feedback from stakeholders
- California Food Package Summit – April 7, 2008
- Implement CA changes by October 1, 2009

For more information or to provide input, contact:

Laurie.Green@cdph.ca.gov

916-928-8632

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