

## WIC Facts and Guidelines for Health Care Providers

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### Background

WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. It is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and directed in Maryland by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. WIC clinics operate statewide through local health departments and non-profit health agencies.

WIC serves eligible pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women and their infants and children up to age 5.

To qualify, all applicants must be determined to be eligible based upon household income ( $\leq$  185% of the federal poverty level), residence, and evidence of nutritional risk.

All participants receive a nutritional risk assessment. The results of the assessment determine the nutrition education and prescribed food package that are provided.

Participants receive WIC checks to buy their foods. Checks are usually issued on a tri-monthly basis and participants receive additional nutrition education at these times.

### WIC Foods

WIC foods (including infant formula and medical foods) are supplemental. They are intended to provide some, but not all, of the foods the participant requires each day.

WIC foods contribute key nutrients such as protein, calcium, iron, folic acid, and vitamins A, C, and D. These nutrients are essential for health and well-being during times of growth and development.

WIC foods are prescribed for each participant and are meant to be consumed by that individual, not the household.

### Breastfeeding Support

WIC is committed to breastfeeding as the normal way to feed an infant and supports the American Academy of Pediatrics position on breastfeeding.<sup>1</sup> WIC encourages mothers to breastfeed their infants for the first year of life and beyond unless medically contraindicated.

Trained WIC staff members provide counseling and support to mothers prenatally, during the postpartum period, and beyond to help ensure breastfeeding success.

The WIC food package for exclusively breastfeeding mothers and their infants has the highest market value of all the WIC food packages.

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<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics, Section on Breastfeeding, Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk, Pediatrics 2005; 115; 496-506

Breastfeeding aids, such as breast pads, are provided to breastfeeding mothers. Breast pumps may be provided for special circumstances.

## WIC Formula and Medical Foods

WIC provides the following formulas to partially or non-breastfed infants:

- Similac Advance
- Enfamil Prosobee

WIC **does NOT provide** other brands of standard milk- or soy-based infant formula such as Enfamil Newborn, Enfamil Infant, Similac Soy Isomil, Enfamil Gentlease, Gerber Good Start, or store brands.

**Other formulas** may be provided to infants with a medical diagnosis that warrants the use of such products. Examples of diagnoses include:

- Prematurity
- Failure to thrive
- Low birth weight
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Severe food allergies
- Malabsorption syndromes

**WIC Eligible Nutritionals** such as Pediasure, Boost, or Neocate One Plus may be issued to children and women with a medical diagnosis warranting the use of such products. Examples of diagnoses include:

- Failure to thrive
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Malabsorption syndromes
- Severe food allergies

**Participants who are tube-fed, or are enrolled in the Rare and Expensive Case Management (REM) Program** may receive infant formula or a medical food through the Maryland Medical Assistance Program.

**Soy beverage and/or tofu** may be provided to women and children  $\geq$  1 year of age.

For an infant or child who cannot or should not consume foods because of a diagnosis such as prematurity, **formula or medical food only** can be issued, up to the amounts shown in the WIC Foods List table.

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