



# Overview of the New Food Packages

STAFF HANDOUT

## After more than 30 years the WIC food packages are changing!

Starting June 1, 2009, Colorado WIC will offer new foods to participants. The reasons for the changes are to:

- ▶ Meet the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*
- ▶ Meet the Healthy People 2010 goals and objectives
- ▶ Provide consistency with American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations on infant feeding
- ▶ Strengthen WIC's breastfeeding promotion and support messages
- ▶ Add foods that appeal to diverse populations

The new food packages help to reinforce key nutrition messages such as:

- ▶ Eat more fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Lower saturated fat and cholesterol intake
- ▶ Increase whole grains and fiber
- ▶ Drink less juice and sweetened beverages
- ▶ Babies are meant to be breastfed

Last month we discussed the mother/baby breastfeeding pair. This month we are focusing on the new foods for pregnant and non-breastfeeding/postpartum women and children.

## Overview of Food Packages for Children and Non-breastfeeding Women

	Children		Pregnant	Postpartum
Milk (gallons)	3 gal + 1 qt	Milk (gallons)	4½ gal + 1 quart	3 gal + 1 quart
Cheese (pounds)	1	Cheese (pounds)	1	1
Eggs (dozen)	1	Eggs (dozen)	1	1
Juice (ounces)	128	Juice (ounces)	144	96
Breakfast cereal (ounces)	36	Breakfast cereal (ounces)	36	36
Whole grains (pounds)	2	Whole grains (pounds)	1	---
Dry beans and/or peanut butter	1 lb or 18 oz	Dry beans and/or peanut butter	1 lb and 18 oz	1 lb or 18 oz
Fruit & vegetable voucher	\$6	Fruit & vegetable voucher	\$8	\$8

### Overview of Food Changes:

- Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains, such as whole grain bread, brown rice, and soft corn tortillas
- Tofu and soy beverage as a substitute for milk
- Canned beans as a substitute for dry beans
- Beans *and* peanut butter for pregnant women; beans *or* peanut butter for non-breastfeeding women
- Less juice for women and children; no juice for infants
- Less milk and cheese; fewer eggs

### Other food changes:

- More varieties and quantity of canned fish for breastfeeding women
- Baby food fruits and vegetables for all babies, and baby food meats for exclusively breastfeeding infants

## Details and Highlights

**Milk:** Whole milk for 1 year-old children, and lower fat (skim, 1% or 2%) milk for women and children aged 2 – 5.

**Whole Grains:** 100% whole grain bread, hamburger or hot dog buns, brown rice, or soft corn tortillas are allowed. The regulations also require that at least half of the breakfast cereals be made from whole grain.

### **Substitutions Allowed:**

1. *Tofu or soy beverage for milk.*
2. *Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables*
3. *Fresh bananas for some baby food*
4. *Canned beans for dry beans*
5. *Peanut butter for beans and beans for peanut butter*

### **Medical Documentation**

With a medical prescription, the new regulations allow participants who receive special formulas (e.g. PediaSure) to also receive any WIC food that they are able to eat. The medical prescription must clearly identify the prescribed formula, as well as the specific supplemental foods allowed for that participant. A medical prescription listing approved qualifying conditions is also needed to:

- Provide whole milk to women and children over 2 years of age
- Issue more than 1 pound of cheese to women or children
- Issue any amount of soy beverage or tofu to children
- Issue more than 4 pounds of tofu to women

### **Nutrition Goals of the New Foods**

The new food rules follow the goals of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to promote health and reduce risk for chronic diseases like obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and various cancers. The key goals of the *Dietary Guidelines* include:

1. Choose a variety of foods from each food group.
2. Limit saturated fats, *trans* fats, cholesterol, added sugar, and salt.
3. Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.
4. Consume whole grains more often; at least half of grains eaten should be whole grains.
5. Consume fat-free or low fat (1%) milk, or their equivalents.
6. Balance energy (calories) eaten with physical activity.

The food packages also better meet the nutritional needs of the current WIC population.

1. All infants need zinc and iron around 6 months of age.
2. The new food packages offer more cultural foods choices.
3. Obesity has become a major health concern in America for adults *and* children. The new food packages are healthy for all participants, and may help prevent obesity by:
  - Including lower calorie foods, such as low fat or fat-free milk, fruits, and vegetables
  - Reducing higher calorie foods like cheese, eggs, and juice
  - Providing fiber (whole grains, beans, fruits, and vegetables)
  - Promoting healthy eating habits for infants, such as delaying solids until around 6 months

## Nutrition Messages of the New Foods



### Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are *low in calories and fat, and high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals*. Different fruits and vegetables are rich in different nutrients, so choosing a variety of colors every day may reduce risk for chronic illnesses such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, or obesity. Also, eating whole fruits and vegetables instead of juice provides more vitamins, minerals, and fiber

- Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables are nutritionally equal; both are allowed in the new food packages. This topic will be discussed in more detail in future months.
- Fruits and vegetables will replace some of the juice for women and children. Baby food fruits and vegetables will replace infant juice.



### Baby Foods: vegetables, fruits, and meats

Fruits and vegetables are also available for all infants over 6 months old. As well, all infants need *food sources of iron and zinc around 6 months of age*; meats are a good source of these nutrients.

- Fully breastfed babies get baby food meats as an incentive to continue breastfeeding



### Whole Grains

Whole grains are complex carbohydrates that contain the entire grain kernel that has *fiber and more vitamins and minerals* than refined grain foods (such as white bread). Fiber helps maintain a healthy colon, and reduces the risk for a variety of illnesses, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and colorectal cancer. Whole grain products can usually be found by looking at the ingredient list on the food package, which will list “whole” before the first ingredient.

- Allowable whole grain foods (brown rice, soft corn tortillas, and 100% whole grain bread products) were chosen based on whole grain content.



### Tofu and Soy Beverage

Calcium is necessary to build strong bones and teeth, and to prevent osteoporosis. In the American diet, dairy foods are usually the main source of calcium. Individuals allergic to dairy products or who prefer a vegan diet may choose tofu or soy beverage as a replacement for milk. Allowed soy foods provide similar nutrients, including protein, vitamins, minerals, and calcium. Compared to milk, tofu and soy beverage *contain less saturated fat, no cholesterol, and are protective against heart disease*.

- Women (and children with medical documentation) may choose soy beverage or tofu.



### Salmon and Sardines

Cold-water fish, such as salmon, sardines, and tuna are good sources of protein, some vitamins and minerals, and a healthy type of fat called omega-3 fatty acids (ALA, DHA, & EPA). Among the many health benefits of these fats, they are very beneficial for brain development, and are *protective against heart disease*.

- As an incentive to continue exclusively breastfeeding, women who exclusively breastfeed will receive more canned fish, and may also choose salmon or sardines.

## Anticipated Participant Questions and Suggested Responses

Why is there no juice on my baby's checks? Why is there less juice on my child's checks?

You sound concerned about feeding your baby. Although juice is a good source of some vitamins, it is easy for children to drink too much and not have room for more nutritious foods. WIC is now giving fruits and vegetables to replace [some of your child's juice] or [all of your baby's juice], because they have more nutrients and fiber than juice.

Why am I receiving less cheese and fewer eggs?

You sound concerned about not having enough food. Cheese and eggs are good sources of some nutrients, but these foods are high in saturated fat and cholesterol that may lead to chronic illnesses like heart disease and obesity. In exchange for these higher fat foods, WIC now gives you fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

My child won't eat whole grain/whole-wheat bread. Why can't I get white bread?

Sometimes trying new foods isn't successful the first time! These grain foods were chosen to help your family get more fiber, which helps prevent constipation. WIC recommends eating half of grain foods as whole grains. So your child can still eat some white bread, but why not try brown rice or tortillas as his/her other grain servings?

My family only drinks whole milk. Is low fat milk as good for my child as whole milk?

Actually, low fat milk is better for your whole family! The protein, vitamin, mineral, and calcium contents of whole milk and low fat milk are about the same. But lower fat milk, especially fat-free or 1% milk, is lower in saturated fat and cholesterol, two things that may lead to heart disease and obesity. After your child turns two, he or she should switch to low fat milk.

What are soy beverage and tofu?

Soy foods, such as soy beverage and tofu, are made from soybeans. These foods are good sources of nutrients found in milk, such as calcium and protein, but are lower in saturated fat and cholesterol. Try substituting soy beverage or tofu for milk or meat in your recipes.