

WIC

Participant Handbook for Women, Infants, and Children



**Eat fruits and veggies...
and your kids will too!**

Fresh, frozen or canned...
all are good choices.



Welcome to **WIC**

This booklet tells you:

- What is WIC?
- How to use your WIC checks.
- Your rights and responsibilities as a WIC participant.

Your questions and comments are always welcome.

New York State WIC Program



**Make meals and
memories together.**

- Encourage your child to try foods.
- Talk about fun and happy things.
- Focus on the meal and each other.



Cook together. Eat together. Talk together.

Make mealtime a family time.

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What is WIC?

WIC stands for Women, Infants and Children.

WIC's goal is to improve the health and nutrition of moms and kids. It is well known that pregnancy and early childhood are among the most important times for growth and development.

Who may apply?

- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding women
- Women who have just had a baby including:
 - those who breastfeed their babies
 - those who do not breastfeed their babies
- Infants and children under the age of five



Where do I apply?

You can get the name and phone number of the WIC agency near you by calling 1-800-522-5006 or through the New York State Department of Health web site www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/index.htm

What is certification?

Certification is the process required in order to receive benefits.

To qualify for WIC, you must:

- Live in New York State; however, U.S. Citizenship or legal residency is not required
- Meet the income guidelines set by the federal government
- Have a need for improved nutrition

WIC will:

- Conduct a health assessment
- Provide opportunities to discuss nutrition and health concerns
- Provide referrals to other medical care and services
- Provide foods each month that will help you with your food budget

What do I need to bring to the WIC office?

When you call the WIC office for a certification appointment, staff will tell you which of the following you need to bring:

- Proof of identity for you and your child
- Proof of household income
- Proof of residency
- Immunization record for infants and children

In addition, you may be asked to bring:

- A completed New York State Department of Health Medical Referral Form from your health care provider (including blood work).
- If you or your child is on a special formula, you will need the “Medical Documentation for WIC Formula & Approved WIC Foods for Infants, Children and Women” form.
- The forms can be found on the New York State Department of Health web site.

To be enrolled, a child must be present at each certification.

It will not cost you any money to enroll in the WIC Program.

What happens after I am certified?

- You and a WIC nutritionist will work together to discuss how much food you will get each month. This is called your **food package**. Later, if you want to make a change in your food package, talk to a WIC nutritionist to make adjustments.
- You will get WIC checks to use at the grocery store each month to buy the WIC foods in your food package.
- You will have opportunities to learn about ways you can use your WIC foods.
- You will receive breastfeeding support and peer counseling.
- You will learn about many other helpful programs.
- You will meet with a nutritionist to discuss your nutrition and health needs.

How long can I get WIC?

Once certified:

- Pregnant women can stay on WIC for the length of their pregnancy.
- Breastfeeding mothers may continue to receive WIC benefits until their baby's first birthday. A breastfeeding mother's nutrition and health needs are reviewed 6 to 9 months after delivery.
- Mothers who are not breastfeeding may be eligible for WIC benefits until their babies are 6 months old.
- Infants and children may continue to receive WIC benefits until they turn 5 years old. Infant's and children's nutrition and health needs are reviewed every 6 months.
- If your household income changes, you will be asked to provide income information during your certification. WIC staff may ask you to bring income information to each appointment.

Breastfeeding Support

Choosing how to feed your baby is one of the most important decisions you will make as a new parent. WIC knows that breastfeeding is important for mother and baby. Breast milk helps keep babies healthy. It protects against many types of illness like colds, flu, diarrhea and ear infections.

Breastfeeding...it's what we do.

WIC supports breastfeeding with more food in your food package and you can stay on WIC for a full year. After breastfeeding is well established, breastfed infants receive a larger food package at 6 months of age.

Your WIC Program has peer counselors who are breastfeeding mothers just like you. They can share with you the joys of motherhood and help you with breastfeeding.

You can continue to breastfeed when you return to work or school. WIC has a variety of breast pumps available and staff who are experienced in helping mothers.

Visit the web site, www.breastfeedingpartners.org. This site was specially designed to help mothers who want to know more about breastfeeding.



What is nutrition education at WIC?

Nutrition education is learning about food, healthy lifestyles and behavior and how it affects your health. We know that you are making great efforts to be the best parent you can be. You are giving your child the advantages of the healthiest pregnancy, child development and overall health that you can.

Nutrition education at WIC can be:

- With you and a WIC nutritionist
- In a group session

During group sessions, you can help each other by sharing experiences and information about parenting, nutrition and lifestyle concerns. It is a time to share and connect with others in a pleasant and informal atmosphere.



What are the WIC foods?

The WIC Acceptable “Foods Card” tells you which foods you can purchase with your WIC checks. It is a good idea to bring the “Foods Card” with you each time you go to the store to use your WIC checks.

WIC foods for infants

Breast milk is the best food for babies. Breastfeeding is important for babies. Breast milk is all that babies need for the first 6 months. If breast milk is not available, WIC can provide some iron-fortified formula. You must buy the form (powder, concentrate or ready-to-use) listed on your checks. Buy only the brand, container, size and number of containers printed on your checks.

Plain, dry, boxed infant cereal

– Buy only the brand and amount printed on your checks.

You may not buy:

- Cereal with added fruit or formula
- Organic, added DHA or other extra ingredients

Infant food vegetables and fruits

You may buy:

- Any variety of baby food vegetables and baby food fruits listed on the “Foods Card”
- Single vegetable or single fruit in 4-oz. jars



Fully breastfed infants will also receive baby food meats.

- You may buy any variety of baby food meats listed on the “Foods Card.”
- Baby food meats in 2.5-oz. containers

WIC foods for women and children

Milk

Milk is high in calcium, protein and vitamin D

You may buy:

- Nonfat (fat free or skim)
- Low fat (1%)
- Whole milk (only for children between the ages of 1 and 2 years of age)
- Lactose reduced or 100% lactose free, nonfat or low fat



Talk to the nutritionist if you want to buy:

- Evaporated (canned) milk
- Dry/powdered nonfat milk
- Tofu
- Soy beverage

You may NOT buy:

- Chocolate or flavored milk
- Buttermilk
- Milk with added calcium
- Organic milk
- Sweetened condensed milk

You must buy milk in units specified on your checks (gallons, half gallons or quarts) OR in the largest container available at the store.

Children between the ages of 1 and 2 years should drink whole milk. Fat free or 1% milk is recommended for everyone over the age of 2.

Soy beverage

- Soy beverage is a good source of soy protein.
- Soy beverage is available for individuals who qualify.
- You may buy any soy beverage listed on the “Foods Card.”

Tofu

Tofu is a good source of soy protein.

You may buy any calcium set tofu listed on the “Foods Card.”



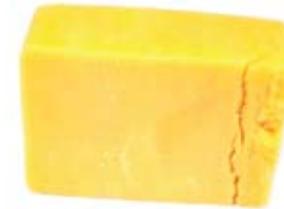
Cheese

Cheese is high in calcium and protein.

You may buy any of the cheeses listed on the “Foods Card,” including lower fat types.

From the dairy case, you may buy blocks or slices of:

- Pasteurized processed American
- Cheddar
- Colby
- Monterey Jack
- Mozzarella



From the deli, you may purchase only American cheese.

Check the net weight on each package. You cannot buy more than the amount printed on your checks.

You may NOT buy:

- Cheese product, cheese food*, cheese spread*
- Flavored or blended cheese
- Imported cheese
- Shredded, cubed, grated, string or stick cheese
- Individually wrapped slices
- Organic cheese

*if an item is cheese food, cheese product or cheese spread, it will say so on the label.



Eggs

Eggs are high in protein and iron.

You may buy medium or large-shell eggs. They can be white or brown.

You may NOT buy:

- Extra large or jumbo eggs
- High cost specialty eggs (including: organic, reduced cholesterol, cage-free/range-free or Omega-3)

Juice

WIC 100% juice has no added sugar and is a good source of vitamin C.



You may buy any juice listed on the “Foods Card” in the size listed on your WIC checks.

You may NOT buy:

- Juice drinks, “ades” (like lemonade), nectars, punches or juice beverages
- Hi-C®, juice cocktails, twistlers or coolers
- Products that are not 100% juice



Cereal

WIC cereals are high in iron, and vitamin B and low in sugar. Many of them are whole grain.

You may buy any of the cereals listed on the “Foods Card.” Check the weight on each box. Buy combinations of boxes that total (or come close to) the number of ounces on your WIC checks. You cannot go over the total ounces on your checks. You must buy cereal in the package size range listed on the “Foods Card.”



You may NOT buy:

- Single serving boxes of cold cereal
- Single serving packets of hot cereal (unless listed as allowed on the “Foods Card”)

Peanut Butter

Peanut butter is high in protein and iron.

You must buy peanut butter in the 18-oz. jar size. You can get chunky or smooth; it may be reduced fat and may be salted or unsalted.



You may NOT buy:

- Peanut spread
- Peanut butter that is mixed with jelly, marshmallow, chocolate or honey
- Peanut butter with added vitamins and minerals
- Freshly ground or whipped

Beans, Peas and Lentils

Beans, peas and lentils are good sources of protein, iron and fiber.

You may buy:

- Dry or canned plain peas, lentils or mature dry beans
- The form (dry or canned) listed on your checks

You may NOT buy:

- Canned beans containing added sugar, fat, meat or oil
- Canned peas, green beans, snap beans, orange beans, wax beans, baked beans or pork and beans

Whole Grain Bread

- Whole grain bread is a good source of fiber and B vitamins.
- You may buy any bread listed on the “Foods Card.”

Whole Grain Tortillas

- Tortillas are a good source of fiber and B vitamins.
- You may buy any tortilla listed on the “Foods Card.”

Tips for using your WIC checks

See page 15 for a sample WIC check.

1. Use your checks at a WIC-authorized vendor (grocery store or pharmacy). Pharmacies may accept checks only for infant formula.
2. All the foods listed on your checks must be purchased. Buy only the type, size and amount of food listed on your WIC checks. The “Foods Card” may be used as a guide for shopping.
3. The WIC foods chosen must not cost more than the “Not to Exceed” amount of the WIC check. If the cost is more, select a less expensive brand to reduce the total cost of the purchase. Additional funds cannot be added.
4. Some farmers are authorized to accept WIC vegetable and fruit checks (only for fresh produce). WIC staff will provide a list of stores and farmers in the area that accept WIC checks. WIC stores and farmers have signs to indicate that they accept WIC checks.
5. For vegetable and fruit checks only, choose fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits in the amounts you wish to purchase.

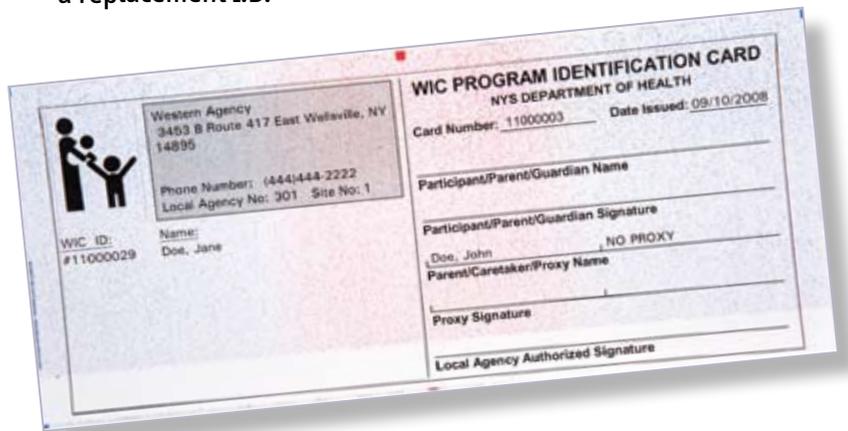


6. For WIC vegetable and fruit checks only, you may choose to add cash (or another form of payment accepted by the store) to pay the amount over the “Not to Exceed” value of the check.

No change is given if the vegetable and fruit purchase is less than the “Not to Exceed” value of the check.
7. At the checkout counter, WIC purchases must be separate from other purchases. When using more than one WIC check, group the foods for each check together.
8. The exact amount of the purchase must be written on the check in the “Pay Exactly” box before signing. The amount in the “Pay Exactly” box must not be more than the “Not to Exceed” value of the check, even if you add your own funds when using a WIC vegetable and fruit check.
9. WIC checks must be used within the “Not Good Before” and “Not Good After” dates listed on the check.
10. Cash, credit or rain checks cannot be issued for foods listed on your WIC checks. WIC foods cannot be returned to the store for credit, cash or exchange.
11. The use of coupons and store shopping cards to reduce the cost of foods purchased with WIC checks is encouraged.
12. Report any lost or stolen checks to the WIC staff as soon as possible. **Lost or stolen checks cannot be replaced.**
13. Checks reported lost or stolen must not be used if later found. WIC staff may be able to replace some of the checks that have not expired. Unused WIC checks must be returned to WIC staff.

Your WIC Identification Card (WIC I.D.)

- Each family is issued a WIC I.D. card.
- This I.D. card must be presented to WIC staff at appointments and to the cashier whenever WIC checks are used. No other form of identification may be shown or requested at the store.
- The WIC participant must sign the I.D. card. When the participant is a baby or a child, the parent or caretaker will sign the I.D. card. All WIC participants can authorize two proxies to sign the I.D. card. Proxies are other family members or friends who can pick up your checks from the WIC office or grocery shop for you.
- The signature of the person using the checks MUST be on the I.D. card and also on file in the WIC office. The signature must be on the I.D. card before shopping with your WIC checks.
- If your WIC I.D. card is lost, stolen or destroyed, contact your WIC office. You must show identification, and the WIC office will issue a replacement I.D.



Your rights as a WIC participant are:

- To receive nutrition/health education.
- To receive a food package designed to meet your nutritional needs and/or your child's nutritional needs.
- To be informed of other available health services.
- To be treated fairly and courteously. If you think you have not been treated fairly, you may call your local WIC office or the Growing Up Healthy Hotline at 1-800-522-5006.
- To ask for a fair hearing. If you think a decision that affects your ability to be on the WIC Program is not fair, you may ask for a hearing within 60 days from the date of the notice of unfavorable decision.

You may request a hearing in writing or by contacting a staff person at your local WIC office or at the New York State Department of Health.

In order to serve you most effectively, your responsibilities include:

- Being on time and keeping all appointments. If you cannot keep an appointment, notify the WIC office as soon as possible.
- Giving the WIC office accurate information to determine your eligibility for the WIC Program.
- Using your WIC checks only at WIC-authorized stores or with WIC-authorized farmers.
- Using your WIC checks to buy only the foods and amounts listed on the checks.
- Using the checks within the "Not Good Before" and "Not Good After" dates printed on the checks.
- Telling the WIC office if you are planning to move, if your phone number changes, if your income changes or if you want to change to another WIC office.
- Being courteous to store cashiers, WIC staff and other WIC participants.

You can be removed from the program if:

- Your income is more than WIC's income guidelines.
- You or your child are no longer at nutritional or health risk.
- You miss your appointment and do not keep your rescheduled appointment within 60 days.
- You return foods or infant formula bought with WIC checks to the store for cash, credit or exchange.
- You sell WIC checks or foods bought with WIC checks.
- You give the WIC Program false information about yourself or your child when applying for the Program.
- You participate in more than one WIC Program at the same time.
- You participate in both the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and WIC at the same time.
- You are abusive or threaten workers or other WIC participants in the WIC Program or in stores.
- You use checks before the "Not Good Before" date or after the "Not Good After" date.
- You buy non-WIC foods or non-food items with your WIC checks.
- You change information on your WIC checks.
- You use checks that were reported as lost or stolen.

Questions and Answers

Q. What if I do not want all of the foods on a check?

A. If you do not expect to use all of the foods, please ask a WIC nutritionist to change your food package.

Q. Can I use coupons with WIC checks at the grocery store or pharmacy?

A. Yes! This helps the WIC Program save money. With the savings, WIC can serve more women, infants and children. Using coupons may also allow you to buy national brands and stay within the "Not to Exceed" amount on your check.

Q. If the store is out of an item, can I get a raincheck?

A. No! Stores may not give you a raincheck for WIC foods. If a store doesn't have all the WIC foods listed on your check, ask the store manager if the foods are in stock. You may have to go to another store if all foods are not available.

Q. What should I do if I move out of town?

A. Be sure to tell your WIC office before you move, if possible. There are WIC programs all over the country. WIC can refer you to a program near your new home. Your local agency may be able to transfer you, so that you do not lose any of your WIC benefits.

Q. Can I get Food Stamps while I am on WIC?

A. Yes, if you meet the income guidelines for Food Stamps. WIC benefits are not considered income when applying for other programs such as Food Stamps.

Q. When does my baby get food?

A. When your baby is 6 months old, WIC will begin providing baby food, fruits, vegetables and cereal. For fully breastfed infants 6 – 12 months old, baby food meats are added.

Q. What can I do if I suspect fraud or abuse?

A. If you suspect someone of committing fraud or abuse, you may report your concerns anonymously. You can contact the toll free hotline at 1-877-282-6657.

Your WIC Local Agency

Get a jump start on better health:

- Breastfeed your new baby as long as possible.
- Switch to fat free or 1% milk for everyone over 2 years old.
- Eat whole grain breads and cereals.
- Eat more vegetables and fruits.
- Start juice after your child's first birthday.
- Begin infant cereal at 6 months of age or when your baby is ready.



State of New York
Department of Health