

CLINICIANS & WIC



WHO IS WIC FOR?

WIC can benefit many of your patients. WIC is a nutrition program that provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to healthcare and other services, free of charge, to income-eligible Massachusetts children under the age of 5, and pregnant, post-partum, or breastfeeding people.

Grandparents, parents, foster parents, or guardians of a child under 5 can apply for WIC on the child's behalf.

Pregnant people can enroll in WIC even before their first medical prenatal provider appointment.

Patients can start the application process online at www.mass.gov/forms/apply-for-wic-online.

WHAT BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT DOES WIC PROVIDE?

WIC provides FREE breastfeeding support services, which include:

- Access to CLCs and/or IBCLCs at all local WIC programs
- Individualized breastfeeding education, assessments, and counseling
- Breastfeeding Peer Counselors
- Assistance in planning to return to work/school
- Assistance in accessing breast pumps
- Virtual support programs, such as Baby Café™, and classes available through many local WIC programs
- Referrals to community breastfeeding support for families, including those who are not WIC-eligible, via ZipMilk (www.ZipMilk.org)

Visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/get-wic-breastfeeding-support-services>.



WHAT NUTRITION EDUCATION DOES WIC PROVIDE?

WIC nutrition counselors provide individualized education on key nutrient needs, common feeding challenges, nutrition concerns for specific life stages (such as pregnancy), age-appropriate eating patterns and feeding practices, and physical activity. Counseling is provided in person, or via telehealth and phone sessions.

Parents and guardians of low-risk infants and children 9 months and older may also be eligible to complete online educational modules (WICSmart) at their convenience up to twice a year instead of regular follow-up appointments.

Online nutrition education groups, including cooking demonstrations, are also an option for some families. WIC's extensive array of nutrition education materials, translated in numerous languages, is available on the WICShopper app and at www.mass.gov/wic-information-for-participants.



HOW DO WIC FOOD BENEFITS SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS?

WIC provides lactose-free milk options as well as soy options for milk protein intolerance or allergy, or to support families following strict vegan diets.

WIC requires the completion of the Request for Special Formula and Food (RSFF) form with the specified medical condition/ICD code to issue special formulas. The RSFF form must be completed and signed by a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or certified nurse midwife. The form is required at each certification. The RSFF form, instructions for health care providers to complete the form, and a full listing of Massachusetts WIC allowed formulas can be found at www.mass.gov/wic.

By federal ruling, the Medicaid Program is the first payer for special formula for patients who are also WIC participants. If a WIC/MassHealth participant needs special formula, the Prior Approval process to obtain formula from MassHealth should be initiated immediately.

WIC will issue one to two months of benefits for the prescribed formula in order to allow for the MassHealth Prior Approval process to be completed, and will act as a safety net for families should the process take longer.

WIC's RSFF form and formula listing, as well as the MassHealth Medical Necessity Review Form, can be downloaded from our website at www.mass.gov/wic-information-for-providers.

HOW CAN WIC & CLINICIANS WORK TOGETHER?

Growth Screening

Recent measurements taken at your office can be used to meet WIC's data collection requirements. Please encourage families to use their patient portals or copies of their well-child physical forms to share information with WIC. Both weight and length/height measurements are required for WIC's growth assessment process.

Iron Screening

WIC requests that clinicians provide results for iron screening tests (hematocrit or hemoglobin) for the following individuals:

- **Pregnant people** - as early as possible in the current pregnancy
- **Postpartum people** - once during the postpartum period, ideally within 6 weeks after delivery
- **Infants** - between 9 and 13 months
- **Children** - between 15 and 18 months and thereafter every 12 months, if blood values are normal, or every 6 months, if values are low

These requirements follow CDC's recommended schedule for preventing and controlling iron-deficiency anemia in high-risk populations.

Lead Screening

Federal regulations require that WIC screen every child upon enrollment to determine if the child has had a blood lead test. If the child has not had a blood lead test, education is provided to the parent/caretaker and they are referred back to their medical provider for blood lead testing. If the lead test result is available, WIC staff will provide counseling for abnormal lead level values.

Immunization

WIC staff use the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) to review immunization status with the parent/caretaker at every appointment. It is important for providers to enter immunizations administered in the MIIS to allow WIC to determine up-to-date status and provide education and referrals.

WIC Act Early

The Massachusetts WIC Program is pleased to work with providers to monitor child development using tools developed by CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. WIC staff educate parents and guardians about developmental milestones, help to identify concerns early and provide timely referrals for follow-up and developmental screening. For additional information, please visit www.mass.gov/wic-act-early.

Communicating with WIC

WIC confidentiality regulations require guardians to complete a release form to allow WIC staff to talk directly with their medical providers. The WIC Release Form can be found in the list of resources posted here at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/what-to-expect-at-your-wic-appointment>.

Providers can also use Medical Referral Forms (MRFs) to share anthropometric data and any other health and/or nutrition concerns they might have about their WIC-participating patients. MRFs can be downloaded from our website at www.mass.gov/info-details/wic-medical-referral-forms.



We're here to help!

Please contact us for additional information or if you have any questions regarding your patients and WIC. We look forward to working with you.



www.mass.gov/wic
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This institution is an equal opportunity provider.