The Massachusetts Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program provides free food and nutrition information to help keep pregnant women, infants and children under five healthy and strong. Many working families are eligible. To learn more, look inside.
Page 1. Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program

Page 2. We Know Breastfeeding!

Page 3. Health Outcomes Research: WIC Works!

Page 4. Shopping with WIC Stretches the Healthy Food Budget for Your Patients!

Page 5. Shopping with WIC is Easy!

Page 6. A Whole Lot More!

Page 7. What Does WIC Need from Healthcare Providers?

Page 8. Working with WIC for Patients Who Need Special Formula
WHAT IS WIC?

WIC is a health and nutrition program that can benefit many of your patients. WIC provides personalized nutrition and health education, healthy food, breastfeeding support, immunization screening, referrals, and other services free of charge to Massachusetts families who qualify.

WIC’s goal is to help keep pregnant and postpartum women and kids under age 5 healthy. Each local WIC program has a variety of nutrition and lactation staff, many of whom hold advanced degrees and/or are Registered Dietitians, Licensed Dietitians/Nutritionists, Certified Lactation Counselors (CLC), and International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC).

WHO IS WIC FOR?

- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding women, up to 1 year postpartum
- Non-breastfeeding women, up to 6 months postpartum
- Infants and children under 5

Important WIC Eligibility Facts:

- Families with a household income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are WIC eligible (see income guidelines on the last page). Many working families are eligible!
- Individuals currently receiving certain MassHealth/Medicaid health insurance plans, TAFDC or SNAP are automatically income-eligible for WIC.
- Foster parents can enroll their babies and children under 5 regardless of their household income.

HOW CAN WIC AND HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS WORK TOGETHER?

Clinicians play a key role in the referral process for patients to obtain WIC services. The medical guidance you provide helps identify nutrition services and information patients need.

Local WIC nutritionists are pleased to collaborate on patient care and to reinforce and follow up on recommendations with the patients’ consent. Clinicians may also request a copy of patients’ nutrition assessments by checking the box on the Medical Referral Form (MRF).

HOW CAN I HELP MY PATIENTS RECEIVE WIC BENEFITS?

Clinicians strongly influence patients’ decisions about their health and therefore a referral to WIC from a provider carries a lot of weight.

- Mention WIC when patients call to schedule appointments, and make it a part of the routine—pregnant women can receive WIC services before they have their first OB visit and as soon as they think they may be pregnant.
- Mention WIC at every patient visit.
- Put a WIC brochure in every new patient packet.
- Display WIC posters and brochures in your office in the language(s) patients speak.
- Complete the Medical Referral Form (MRF).
We Know Breastfeeding!

Refer your patients to WIC for breastfeeding education & support!
FREE breastfeeding support services at WIC include:

- Access to CLCs and/or IBCLCs at all local WIC programs
- Individualized breastfeeding education, assessments, and counseling
- “Mother to Mother” Breastfeeding Peer Counselors
- Assistance in planning to return to work/school
- Assistance in accessing breast pumps
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials
- Support programs, such as Baby Cafés, and classes available at many WIC programs

Referrals to community breastfeeding support for families, including those who are not WIC-eligible, via ZipMilk (www.ZipMilk.org)

Visit www.mass.gov/breastfeeding-initiative
Health Outcomes Research: WIC WORKS!

**WIC Produces Positive Prenatal and Birth Outcomes**
WIC participation is positively associated with gestational age and mean birth weight and negatively associated with the incidence of low and very low birth weight.¹

WIC research indicates prenatal WIC participation is associated with positive health outcomes for women and children.²

**WIC Improves Children’s Health and Learning**
WIC reduces child food insecurity.³

WIC protects children from low-income families from negative health and growth consequences.⁴

WIC participation is associated with improved diets in children.¹

Children who participate in WIC or whose mothers are on WIC have a greater utilization of both preventive and curative health care services than nonparticipants.¹

WIC participation has a positive effect on mean levels of iron status in children.⁵

Early WIC participation is associated with both cognitive and academic benefits.⁶

Alignment of the WIC food package with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans was a potential contributor to decreased childhood obesity among preschool children between 2008 and 2011.⁷

**WIC Improves Immunization Rates**
Children in WIC have higher vaccination coverage than WIC-eligible children who never participated and have vaccination coverage comparable to more affluent children.⁸

**WIC Has a Positive Effect on Breastfeeding**
Prenatal WIC enrollees are more likely to initiate breastfeeding and breastfeed longer than postpartum enrollees. Women who enroll in WIC in their 1st trimester of pregnancy have better breastfeeding outcomes than those who enroll in the 3rd trimester.⁹

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WIC Approved Foods
WIC participants receive monthly benefits for healthy foods such as the ones pictured above. The complete WIC Approved Food Guide is available at www.mass.gov/wic.

Fruits & Vegetables
The WIC Program offers a fruit and vegetable benefit for women, infants, and children. Women and children receive $11 monthly, infants 9 months and older are eligible for either $4 or $8 per month. Farmers’ market coupons are offered during the summer months.

Whole Grain Options
WIC offers whole wheat or whole grain products such as bread, pasta, corn and whole wheat tortillas, rice, and oatmeal. Some options are gluten-free.

Dairy Options
In addition to milk and cheese, delicious and nutritious yogurt is available for women and children. They can also choose to purchase string cheese sticks with their WIC benefits.

Cereals Kids Will Love
WIC only offers high-iron and lower-sugar cereals such as Honey Bunches of Oats, Multi Grain Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Frosted Mini-Wheats (original), Corn Flakes, and more.

Depending on the household size, the average WIC family can save between $100 and $200 per month utilizing their food benefits.
Shopping with WIC is Easy!

The WIC Card!
Shopping with WIC is easy! With the WIC Card, WIC transactions at the store are fast, easy and discreet. Families have a great deal of flexibility in terms of how much of their benefits they want to use at any given time throughout the month.

WIC Shopper Mobile App!
Participants have the ability to view available WIC benefits on smartphones and scan product barcodes while shopping to determine if the item is WIC-approved and available in their benefits.

Serving Participants with Special Dietary Needs

Soy Milk and Tofu
A WIC nutritionist can assign these milk substitutes when a participant has a milk protein intolerance or allergy, or when the family follows a strict vegan diet. Women can substitute soy milk and tofu for a half portion of their cow’s milk benefit for preference.

Lactose-Free Milk
WIC can offer lactose-free milk to a woman or child who shows signs or symptoms of lactose-intolerance.

Fat-Reduced Milk for Children Less than 2 Years Old
To better align with recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), fat-reduced milks are available for children 12 months to 2 years of age for whom overweight or obesity is a concern. This substitution is offered to families by WIC nutritionists but is not mandated. Health care providers can also request fat-reduced milk for their participants; however, a prescription form is not required.

Please note that per WIC policy whole milk is ONLY provided to women and children over the age of 2 who have a documented medical condition that warrants the use of a high-calorie special formula or supplement.

For special formula requests, see page 8.
A Whole Lot More!

Did you know that families also receive these great services and benefits through WIC?

Health Screenings and Wellness Education:
- Adherence to ACIP-recommended immunization schedules, substance use, domestic violence, oral health, safe sleep practices, physical activity, and a whole lot more.

Health and Human Service Referrals:
- Child care, dental care, housing, SNAP, TAFDC, health insurance, home-visiting programs, and many other referrals that can benefit the whole family such as discounts to the New England Aquarium, the Children’s Museum, and the Museum of Science.

Many WIC Programs also offer:
- Online Nutrition Education for low-risk children 15 months – 5 years of age and telephone nutrition counseling is available at some local WIC programs.
- Happiest Baby on the Block classes to help new parents learn how to soothe their babies. Classes are held at WIC clinics and various community settings.
- Coordinated services for high-risk participants with nutritionists at community health centers and Growth and Nutrition Programs. WIC collaborates with clinicians, Head Start/Early Head Start, Early Intervention, and other programs to enhance nutrition services in the community.

More than half of WIC programs are now offering The Good Food Project!

The Good Food Project was created to help participants to shop and cook more efficiently using WIC foods. Local WIC programs are offering cooking demonstrations and food tastings based on a curriculum containing over 40 delicious, healthy recipes. Our data shows that participation in Good Food Project activities improves families’ use of the WIC food benefits and increases the length of time they participate in the program!
What Does WIC Need from Healthcare Providers?

Iron Screening
To screen for nutrition needs, WIC requests that clinicians provide results for iron screening tests (hematocrit or hemoglobin). For your WIC patients, bloodwork requirements are:

- Pregnant women – as early as possible in the current pregnancy
- Postpartum women – 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 the CDC 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.

Immunizations
In addition, WIC screens for immunizations and asks parents to share their children’s vaccination records. Staff review immunization status and promote adherence to ACIP-recommended schedules by providing education and referrals.

Other Health Information
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/wic
Working with WIC for Patients Who Need Special Formula

- The only formulas that can be issued without a Request for Special Formula and Food (RSFF) form are Similac Advance and Similac Soy Isomil (20 kcal/oz).

- To access special formula from WIC, a 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.

- Similac Total Comfort, Similac For Spit-Up and Similac Sensitive (all 19 kcal/oz) are available through WIC, although these are not considered standard formulas. USDA requires medical documentation for WIC issuance of any infant formula that is not 20 kcal/oz. A RSFF is required for these three formulas before issuance will be approved.

- A provider’s prescription pad can be used temporarily in place of the RSFF form. The prescription must include the child’s name, date of birth, formula requested, acknowledgement of a formula’s 19 kcal/oz caloric density (if applicable), complete medical diagnosis warranting need, length of issuance, provider signature, and date of request. One month of benefits may be issued; the participant will need to bring a completed RSFF form to receive additional months of issuance at their next WIC appointment.

- 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 formula should be obtained from MassHealth through the Prior Approval process. MassHealth members requiring Similac Total Comfort, Similac For Spit-Up, or Similac Sensitive, will receive these formulas through WIC without needing to pursue prior authorization from MassHealth.

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

- Providers must submit a Medical Necessity Review Form for Enteral Nutrition Products to the patient’s MassHealth Plan. The form must include the individual’s name, date of birth, formula requested, length of formula issuance, provider signature, and date of request as well as any additional required medical or health information that supports the need of a specialized formula. It is very important that the MassHealth Prior Authorization request form be completely filled out, and that all required information is submitted in order to prevent delays or denials.
DO YOU HAVE A CHILD UNDER 5?
ARE YOU PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING?

WIC

OFFERS FAMILIES:

• Free healthy food
• Personalized nutrition consultations
• Tips for eating well to improve health
• Referrals for medical and dental care, health insurance, child care, housing and fuel assistance, and other services that can benefit the whole family!

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WIC, CALL 1-800-WIC-1007 OR VISIT MASS.GOV/WIC

GOOD FOOD and A WHOLE LOT MORE!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.
Massachusetts WIC Nutrition Program