USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

How WIC Helps

Improve the health of you and your family

Call your local health department to see if you, your baby, or child are eligible to get WIC program benefits.

Check out the web-based **WIC Prescreening Tool** and see if you are eligible for WIC benefits. Please note that this is not an application for WIC. To apply for WIC benefits, you must make an appointment at your local WIC agency. For more information, please view http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/howtoapply/eligibilityrequirements.htm.

How WIC Helps

- WIC helps by improving the health of nutritionally at-risk low-income women, infants, and children. WIC services are provided at no cost to you.

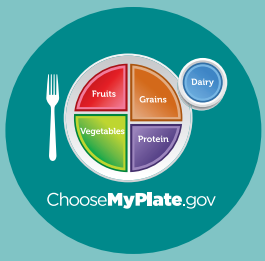
Who WIC Helps

- Pregnant women
- Moms up to 6 months after the baby is born, if they are not breastfeeding
- Moms up to 1 year after the baby is born, if they continue breastfeeding
- Babies up to their 1st birthday
- Children from age 1 up to their 5th birthday

What WIC Provides

- Nutritious Foods
- Nutrition Information
- Breastfeeding Support
- Healthcare Referrals
- Community Program Information

Healthy Eating



Healthy Weight Gain

Breastfeeding

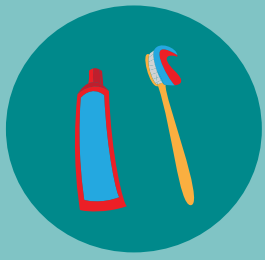
Regular Healthcare and Vaccines

Physical Activity

Partner with WIC staff to meet your goals such as...

Healthy Cooking

Dental Care



Shopping on a Budget

Food Safety

WIC foods are good sources of important nutrients to help you and your children grow and develop.

The WIC food package provides you with some of the foods you need for your diet. It supplements the foods you buy. WIC staff can help you plan to make healthy choices for yourself and your family. If you are homeless, tell the WIC staff. They may be able to provide WIC foods that do not need cooking or refrigeration.

WIC foods include baby food, breakfast cereal, fruits and vegetables, juice, eggs, milk, cheese, peanut butter, whole-wheat bread and other whole grains, dried and canned beans/peas, soy-based beverages and tofu, canned fish, and infant formula.

If you are breastfeeding and your baby receives no formula from WIC, you may receive a greater quantity and variety of foods to support your breastfeeding.

WIC Encourages Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a special time for everyone. The entire family can be part of the new baby's life. Breast milk is the best food for your baby's health. It has just the right balance of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients needed for your baby to grow well. Breastfeeding helps to establish a secure and loving bond between you and your baby and offers you many positive health benefits as well, including a reduced risk of diseases such as breast cancer and diabetes.

While breastfeeding is natural, it is also natural to feel a little unsure of yourself at first. If you have questions or need help, call you local WIC staff. They can help you meet other breastfeeding mothers (peer counselors) and breastfeeding experts you can talk to.

How You Can Succeed

- Discuss your plans to breastfeed with your healthcare provider, WIC office, family, friends, boss, and child care providers.
- Ask family and friends to support your decision to breastfeed.
- Breastfeed as soon as possible after your baby is born. Your first milk, called colostrum, helps your baby fight disease and stay healthy.
- Talk to your local WIC staff about proper positioning for breastfeeding.
- Breastfeed often, at least 8 to 12 times a day or every 1½ to 3 hours to meet your baby's needs and to keep up your breast milk supply.
- Talk to your local WIC staff about pumping and storing your breast milk safely if you plan to return to work.
- Feed only breast milk for the first 6 months.
- Continue to breastfeed through at least the first year of your baby's life.
- Eat the same healthy foods that were recommended to you while you were pregnant. You do not need to stop eating certain foods or eat a special diet.
- Rest while your baby naps so you can have energy to breastfeed.

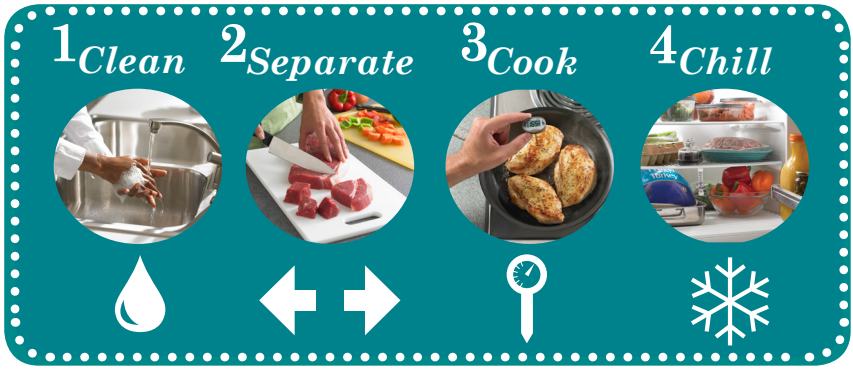
Become Healthier

Good nutrition helps protect against some health problems like obesity. Becoming healthier isn't just about eating healthy—it's also about physical activity. What you eat and drink and your level of physical activity are important for your own health, and also for your child's health. Your children watch what you do more than they listen to what you say. For example, don't just tell your children to eat their vegetables—show them that you eat and enjoy vegetables every day.

Active parents tend to raise active children. Make active play fun for the whole family. Let your child help plan the fun. Start by doing what you can, at least 10 minutes at a time. Every bit adds up. Include 2½ hours of physical activity each week—children need at least 60 minutes each day.

Food Safety

Follow the four basic steps to food safety:



- Wash hands in warm soapy water before and after handling food.
- Wash utensils, cutting boards, and surfaces with hot soapy water after they come into contact with food.
- To prevent cross-contamination, separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, and storing them.
- Never leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours. If the temperature is above 90 ˚F, food should not be left out more than 1 hour.
- Cook to the right temperature. Keep hot foods hot (above 140 ˚F) and cold foods cold (below 40 ˚F).
- Pregnant women should reheat deli meats, luncheon meats, and hot dogs to steaming hot or 165 ˚F before eating.

Pregnant women should not consume:

- Unpasteurized (raw) juice or milk or foods made from unpasteurized milk like cheese and yogurt
- Raw sprouts
- Raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs
- Raw or undercooked fish, shellfish, meat, and poultry
- Refrigerated smoked fish—*unless it's in a cooked dish*, such as a casserole
- Fish that contain high levels of mercury, such as swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel, and shark

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

- Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs can harm your baby and affect everyone in the family. Your baby could be born too early or too small, which may cause breathing and other health problems. As your child grows up, he or she may also have physical problems and problems with behavior and learning. These problems could lead to financial and emotional strain on families.

- Do not use alcohol, tobacco, and street drugs when you are pregnant. Using prescription and over-the-counter medicines incorrectly can also harm your baby. This includes drugs your doctor prescribed before you were pregnant and nonprescription drugs such as aspirin, as well as cold and cough medicine. Check with your doctor before you take any medicines.

- If you drink during pregnancy, your baby may be born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). FASD include birth defects, problems with vision and hearing, as well as other health, mental, learning, and behavioral problems. These problems last a lifetime.

After your baby is born, be very cautious about drinking alcohol—if you choose to drink at all. You may consume a single alcoholic drink if your baby's breastfeeding behavior is well established—no earlier than 3 months old. Then wait at least 4 hours before breastfeeding. Or, you may express breast milk before drinking and feed the expressed milk to your baby later.

Keep your baby away from tobacco smoke. Babies and children who are around tobacco smoke have more colds, coughs, and earaches.

It is important not to use street drugs after your baby is born. Your baby needs your love and care. A mother who abuses alcohol or uses street drugs, including marijuana, may not care for her baby properly. She may forget to feed, wash, and change her baby.

If You Need Help

Talk to someone in the WIC office, a doctor, or other healthcare or social service worker if you need help quitting or cutting down alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. They will know where you can go for help.

Where To Get More Help

National Hunger Hotline:
1-866-348-6479
(1-866-3-HUNGRY)
You can visit
http://www.fns.usda.gov/
programs-and-services

Benefits.gov:
Helps you find other assistance programs. You can visit
http://www.benefits.gov/

Food Safety:
AskKaren.gov helps answer your food safety questions.
You can visit
www.FoodSafety.gov/

Smoking Hotline:
Connect directly to your State quit line coaches:
1-800-QUIT NOW
(1-800-784-8669)
Visit
www.smokefree.gov and
http://betobaccofree.hhs.gov/
for information and tools to help you quit.

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence:
HOPE LINE: 1-800-NCA-CALL
(1-800-622-2255)
Visit
www.ncadd.org
for more information on alcoholism and drug dependence.

Buying, selling, or otherwise misusing benefits from USDA's nutrition assistance programs is a crime. To report suspected abuse, call (800) 424-9121, email: usda_hotline@oig.usda.gov, or write the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Inspector General, PO Box 23399, Washington, DC, 20026-3399.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
Program Aid No. 1198
December 2007
Revised March 2014

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.