



Helping WIC Participants Make the Switch to Low-Fat and Fat-Free Milk

The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the MyPyramid Food Guidance System encourage the consumption of low-fat and fat-free milk as part of an overall healthy diet. Consumption of low-fat and fat-free milk in place of whole and even reduced-fat milk can help participants two years and older meet dietary recommendations for saturated fat intake and maintain a healthy body weight.

With the imminent changes to the food packages, FNS encourages State agencies to consider how to assist WIC participants in switching from whole milk to lower fat milks. Effective nutrition education uses a client-centered approach to address barriers to changing the type of milk consumed while promoting the contributions lower fat milks make to a healthy diet. Nutrition education efforts should also consider the following:

- Some participants may be more receptive to gradually changing the type of milk consumed, in which they first attempt switching from whole milk to reduced-fat milk and then to low-fat or fat-free milk. This approach is consistent with MyPyramid's "Steps to a Healthier You" which encourages small steps toward changing dietary behavior.
- In [recent focus groups](#) that FNS conducted with low-income mothers across the nation, many moms were unaware that low-fat and fat-free milks provide the "same nutrition but less fat" than whole milk. This misperception may represent a significant barrier to behavior change and should be addressed through nutrition education.
- Mothers may also need assistance in identifying different types of milk by reading the food label. Formative research has shown that many individuals are unable to correctly identify the difference between fat-free, low-fat, reduced-fat, and whole milks.
- FNS encourages State agencies to visit the WIC Works Resource System's Sharing Center to find materials other State agencies have developed to facilitate the change to low-fat milk. The section called "Resources for Teaching about WIC Foods" contains several resources on milk.
http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Sharing_Center/statedev.html#foods.
- [Several studies](#) have noted the effectiveness of "The 1% Or Less Campaign" in increasing low-fat milk consumption in community settings. This campaign includes paid advertising, media relations, milk taste tests and nutrition presentations. State agencies may be able to adapt some of these methods for their nutrition education initiatives.

