

New Food Packages: Frequently Asked Questions

1. When will the new food packages be available on participants' checks?

A: Any participant who visits WIC before June 1 will receive the current food packages on each of her checks. Any participant who visits the clinic on June 1 or thereafter will receive the new food packages. Thus, if a participant visits the clinic on May 29, she will receive the current food package for three months. However, if she visits on June 1, her checks will reflect the new food packages.

2. Why doesn't WIC offer white potatoes?

A: White potatoes are a nutritious choice, but studies show that Americans eat more potatoes than any other vegetable. WIC has chosen to include all of the other fruits and vegetables in the food packages to add more variety and nutrients to what WIC participants already eat.

3. Will 1-2 year old children still receive less cereal than 2 year old children?

A: No. After the new food package rules are implemented, all children over 1 year old will receive 36 ounces of cereal. The cereal list will remain approximately the same as the list for the current food packages, since about half of those cereals are whole grain!

4. Will organic produce be allowed?

A: Yes. According to the federal regulations, WIC participants will be able to purchase organic fruits and vegetables with their cash value vouchers or organic fresh bananas with the infant checks.

5. Will organic food products (beans, canned fish) be allowed?

A: No, organic food products will not be allowed on a general basis. This decision is based on a number of factors, such as cost, product distribution within the state, and WIC participant acceptance. However, there may be one or two items that are the *only* WIC-eligible items available on the market that happen to be organic. For example, to be able to offer soy beverage to participants, the only brand that meets federal regulations for WIC is made with organic soybeans (although it is not certified organic).

6. Will there be a choice of beans or peanut butter (or both) for children?

A: Yes. Children will have a choice of beans or peanut butter. Pregnant, exclusively breastfeeding, and partially breastfeeding women will each receive both beans *and* peanut butter.

7. Is one package of dried beans equal to four cans of canned beans? Will the checks read dried or canned beans?

A: Yes. USDA allows four 16-ounce cans of beans to replace one pound of dry beans. There will be separate food packages for canned and dried beans.

8. Why do we offer whole grain instead of whole-wheat bread?

A: Offering whole grain breads allows breads that contain whole grains other than wheat, such as oatmeal, rye, barley, etc. The Allowable Foods List is specific for which brands and types of breads are allowed. This way, participants will only need to look for the specific item rather than read ingredient lists.

9. Does each cereal have to be 51% whole grain, or do half of our cereals have to be whole grain?

A: Half of the number of allowed WIC cereals must be whole grain. The Allowable Foods List meets this requirement.

10. Will stores' cashiers have to verify the whole grain content of a product, or will they have a list of specific products?

A: Each cashier should have a copy of the Allowable Foods List, which contains a listing of the allowed whole grain items.

11. Will we be able to give frozen and canned juices in combinations?

A: Women's checks will list juice as 12-ounce frozen or 46-ounce cans of juice. Children's checks will list juice in 64-ounce containers, and participants may choose between refrigerated cartons or plastic containers of juice.

12. Since infant juice is no longer allowed, will the counseling point that discusses juice in a cup at 7 months be changed?

A: The recommendation to wait until 7 months to introduce juice in a cup has not changed. The only change is that WIC will no longer offer infant juice, since the baby food fruits and vegetables will provide more nutrients than juice.

13. Is soy beverage allowed in the new food package? If so, what brand?

A: Currently, only Pacific Natural Foods Ultra Soy, Non-Dairy Beverage (plain or vanilla) meets the federal regulations for nutrition content. At this time, however, this soy product is not widely available in Colorado. It is anticipated to be available in the near future.

14. Will reduced-fat milk be available for children younger than two years old who are overweight, but have adequate fats in their diet?

A: No. The USDA has not changed the regulations to support the AAP recommendation that particular children receive reduced-fat milk. For now, children aged 1 – 2 years will receive whole milk.

15. What is a medical diagnosis for a child younger than 2 years old to receive 2%, 1%, or skim milk?

A: The USDA regulations do not allow reduced-fat or low-fat milk for children younger than 2 years.

16. Is vegetarianism a valid reason for receiving tofu? What about cultural food preferences?

A: If a *woman* requests tofu, she may have up to the allowed 4 pounds without a medical prescription. However, for a woman to receive more than 4 pounds or for children to receive milk alternatives, veganism, milk allergy, and severe lactose intolerance are valid reasons.

17. Is one quart of milk equal to one package of tofu? Will women be able to purchase up to four packages of tofu?

A: Yes. One pound of tofu may replace one quart of milk, and women may purchase up to four *pounds* of tofu (this amount may increase with medical documentation).

18. Why do the packages contain quarts of milk instead of ½ gallons?

A: WIC is required to provide the full nutritional benefit, which in some situations includes gallons, half gallons, and a quart.

19. Will there be food packages with a combination of milk, soy beverage, and tofu for clients to choose from?

A: We are trying to limit the number of food packages available, but the plan is to make some packages with milk and milk alternative combinations.

20. Currently, lactose intolerance may be documented by the WIC high-risk counselor. Will this be changing with the new guidelines? Also, will self-reporting of milk allergies or vegan diet be sufficient for issuance of soy beverage, tofu, or extra cheese?

A: The regulations allow the RD/RN to continue to identify lactose intolerance as a risk factor. However, in order to provide soy milk or tofu to children, or to provide more than 4 pounds of tofu to women, medical documentation from a physician or someone licensed to write prescriptions in Colorado must be provided.

21. Currently, WIC is able to issue up to 7 pounds of cheese without medical approval. Why is the cheese issuance in the new food package restrictive?

A: Restricting cheese reduces the amount of total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol in the food package. Currently, participants with diagnosed lactose intolerance may receive additional cheese; the new food packages provide lower-fat milk alternatives for adults with lactose intolerance. Hence, there is no need to rely so heavily on cheese.

22. Is a participant required to return every three months with a new prescription for extra cheese or soy products?

A: The new medical documentation form will extend the time frame to six months for valid prescriptions. We are awaiting additional guidance from USDA regarding the time frame for acceptance of prescriptions for soy products and additional cheese.

23. Will the definitions of the participant categories change with the new food packages?

A: Yes. Now all breastfeeding women will be category B. All categories are listed below for your reference.

Pregnant women: P

Breastfeeding women: B

Postpartum, Non-Breastfeeding women: N

Infants Birth – 12 months: I

Children 1 year – 5 years: C

24. Should we recommend baby food meats to 6 month old infants?

A: Yes. According to experts, meat is an excellent source of iron and zinc at 6 months of age. Exclusively breastfed infants are the only infants who will receive baby food meats from WIC, starting around 6 months. However, offering homemade baby food meat to all infants around 6 months of age is a good feeding practice.

25. What is the rationale behind allowing baby food meats only for exclusively breastfed infants?

A: Around 6 months of age, all babies need foods that supply iron and zinc. Meat is one of the best sources of these nutrients. Baby food meats are added as an incentive to encourage mothers to continue exclusively breastfeeding.

26. Is the maximum number of cans of formula at 4 – 5 months now 10 cans instead of 9?

A: Some of the formulas will actually be 11 cans at 4 – 5 months of age, since they come in smaller quantities (Gentlease LIPIL and some of the specialty formulas, Enfamil EnfaCare LIPIL, Neocate Infant, Nutramigen LIPIL with Enflora LGG, and Similac Neosure). The cheat sheet *Infant Formula Ranges* provided in the February packet outlined these differences.

27. Why is WIC decreasing the amount of formula given? Is it to make moms breastfeed more?

A: WIC will continue to provide adequate nutrition to all infants. For formula-fed infants, from 1 – 3 months, the new food package provides the same amount of formula as the current package provides. Between 4 – 5 months, the new package provides *more* formula for infants' growing needs. After 6 months, the food packages provide a little less formula, but participants also receive baby food. As well, for partially breastfed infants, the amount of formula provided will be the amount the infant needs based on how much he is breastfeeding.

Standard Maximum Monthly Formula Allowance, Non-Breastfeeding Infant

	Current Package	New Food Package (June 1)
Birth – 3 months	9 (12.9oz) cans formula	9 (12.9oz) cans formula
4 – 5 months	9 (12.9oz) cans formula	10 (12.9oz) cans formula
6 – 11 months	9 (12.9oz) cans formula	7 (12.9oz) cans formula + 32 jars baby food

It is important to remind participants that WIC is a supplemental program, and that food items beyond what WIC is able to provide need to be obtained from other resources.