



# **Weigh of Life... Taking Action Together**

**Presented by the  
MA WIC Nutrition Program**



Hello my name is:

I would like to talk with you about a project that the Massachusetts WIC program has been working on targeting childhood overweight in the Hispanic population.

Although this project targeted the Hispanic population, the information that you will see can be used with all families with young children.



## **Cultural Perspectives on Childhood Obesity Among Hispanic WIC Participants in MA**

---

### Project Goals:

1. To increase our understanding of the cultural beliefs of Dominican and Puerto Rican families on weight and diet-related issues
2. To develop messages and materials to promote healthy eating behaviors to prevent overweight in Hispanic children

1. “Cultural Perspectives on Childhood Obesity Among Hispanic WIC Participants in Massachusetts” was a USDA Special Projects Grant (2001-2005)
2. Hispanic children, particularly Dominican and Puerto Rican, experience a higher rate of overweight than other populations in the Massachusetts WIC program.
3. Our concern was that our messages were not connecting with the issues of Hispanic families
4. This grant gave us the ability to study and identify targeted, specific messages of Hispanic families
5. The project goals were: (READ SLIDE)

## **Cultural Perspectives on Childhood Obesity Among Hispanic WIC Participants in MA**

### **Activities of the grant included:**

- Collecting anthropometric and body composition measures of 322 children

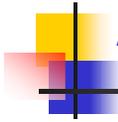


### **(READ SLIDE)**

Anthropometric assessment was completed at local WIC programs throughout Massachusetts.

- Children were between the ages of 2-5
- Children were Dominican, Puerto Rican, African-American and caucasian
- Height and weight were measured and BMI-for-age was calculated
- Arm circumference and skinfold tests\* were taken to assess fat mass, fat-free mass, and % body fat

\* skinfold test included: biceps, triceps, subscapular and suprailiac



## **Anthropometric Findings**

---

- Larger-than-expected proportions of at-risk for overweight and overweight occur in all groups of children
- Children were over-fat, not just overweight
- Weight control is an issue for all children

The findings of our anthropometric measurements were: **(READ SLIDE)**

## **Cultural Perspectives on Childhood Obesity Among Hispanic WIC Participants in MA**

### **Activities of the grant included:**

- Conducting 24 focus groups with over 300 mothers



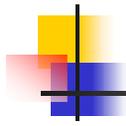
Another major component of grant activities included:

### **(READ SLIDE)**

Focus groups were held to identify the beliefs, diet environment, growth, and awareness of childhood overweight of a little over 300 mothers.

The focus groups were held throughout Massachusetts:

- With Dominican, Puerto Rican, Caucasian and African-American mothers
- Held in English and Spanish

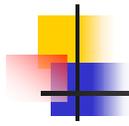


## Focus Group Findings

---

- Most mothers know that children under age 5 can be overweight
- Mothers are not aware that weight and eating patterns established early in life are directly related to lifelong health, including weight status
- Mothers expect their physician to talk to them about their child's weight; if the doctor doesn't, mothers assume that the child's weight is healthy and at a normal, recommended weight
- Mothers feel they are good mothers when they can offer food to their children that they like and will eat

Regardless of ethnicity these are the findings from the focus groups:  
**(READ SLIDE)**

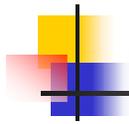


## Focus Group Findings (cont.)

- Barriers mothers experience to prevent overweight in their children:
  - lack of control over their child's diet
  - diet counseling ignores cultural eating patterns
  - appearance of an overweight child means their child is healthy
  - feelings of hopelessness and denial in dealing with overweight
  - lack of money and time to prepare healthy foods and meals
  - conflicting messages regarding weight between doctors and WIC

### **(READ SLIDE)**

The “Project Overview” flyer (yellow), on the right side of your Toolkit, refers to the focus group findings and the anthropometric assessment



## **Goal: To Prevent Overweight in Hispanic Children**

### **Objectives:**

- To use WIC to enhance health services
- To coordinate our efforts
- To offer consistent messages

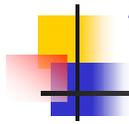
We know the medical community is concerned about childhood overweight.

WIC's goal is to prevent overweight in Hispanic children

We know that doctors (or the medical community) is working to achieve the same goal!

Through this project we have learned that WIC must:

- Partner with medical providers and encourage the use of WIC nutrition services to enhance & support medical services
- Coordinate our efforts to prevent & treat childhood overweight
- Offer consistent messages



## Steps to Healthy Weight in Children

### I. Assess weight status

- **Plot** weight-for-height, weight-for-age and height-for-age
- Beginning at age 2, **track** BMI-for-age
- **Talk** with parents about weight and BMI

The “Steps to Healthy Weight in children” (green flyer) on the right side of your Toolkit, identifies the specific topics WIC counselors will review with all participants.

It is very important that our WIC families are receiving the same messages from their medical provider and their WIC nutrition counselor:

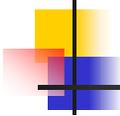
Steps to Healthy Weight in Children are priority messages in the prevention of childhood overweight, adapted from

- AAP Guidelines for Health Supervision III
- Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005

These messages have been reviewed & **endorsed** by the WIC Medical Advisory Board and the Massachusetts Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics Subcommittee on Obesity.

It is critical that we reinforce these messages in the services that we provide.

**(READ SLIDE)**



## **Steps to Healthy Weight in Children (cont.)**

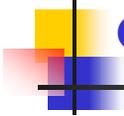
---

### **2. Give consistent messages to parents**

- ✓ Promote good nutrition and feeding patterns early in life
  - **Newborn to 1 years old**
    - Breastfeed
    - Delay introduction of solid food until 4-6 months of age and feed by spoon
    - Introduce cup at 6 months of age
    - Delay introduction of juice until after 6 months-limit to 2-4 ounces per day
    - Begin weaning from the bottle at 6 months of age and eliminate all bottles by 14 months of age.

We have identified core messages needed to be given to our families to prevent overweight in children.

**(READ SLIDE)**



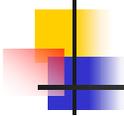
## **Steps to Healthy Weight in Children (cont.)**

---

- **1-2 year old**

- Decrease milk to 16-24 ounces per day
- Limit juice to 4 ounces per day
- Eliminate all bottles by 14 months of age
- Encourage water daily
- Limit junk foods, soda, nectar juices, Malta, and fruit/juice drinks
- Offer child-size food portions
- Offer fruits, vegetables and whole grains daily

**(READ SLIDE)**



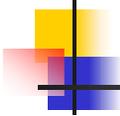
## **Steps to Healthy Weight in Children (cont.)**

---

- **2-5 year olds**

- Offer 16 oz of skim or 1% low-fat milk per day
- Limit juice to 4 ounces per day
- Encourage water daily
- Avoid junk food, soda, nectar juices, Malta, and fruit/juice drinks
- Offer child-size food portions
- Offer fruits, vegetables and whole grains daily

**(READ SLIDE)**



## **Steps to Healthy Weight in Children (cont.)**

---

- ✓ Encourage parents to be good role models by eating well and being physically active with their children at least 1 hour everyday
- ✓ Discourage 'screen' time for children under age 2
- ✓ No more than 1-2 hours of 'screen' time per day for children over the age of 2
- ✓ Encourage more interactive activities
- ✓ Establish regular family meal and snack times

Again, these are priority messages in the prevention of childhood overweight.

### **(READ SLIDE)**

In the left side of your Toolkit, there are 2 sheets with green headings:

- The first sheet is "References: Steps to Healthy Weight in Children" list the references for each of the priority messages that were just reviewed.
- The second sheet is "References on Childhood Overweight" which lists other references relating to childhood overweight.

# Using WIC to get Your Message Across

Prescription for Your Healthy Child	
NAME _____	DATE _____
<b>Prescription for diet change:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Offer low-fat milk only	<input type="checkbox"/> Serve child-size amounts of food
<input type="checkbox"/> Serve 2-3 cups of low-fat milk a day	<input type="checkbox"/> Offer fruit instead of candy or cookies
<input type="checkbox"/> Wean from bottle to cup	<input type="checkbox"/> Offer water instead of soda or juice drinks
<input type="checkbox"/> Offer more fruits and vegetables	
<b>Prescription for activity change:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Schedule active play for at least _____minutes daily	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV no more than _____minutes daily
<b>Other:</b> _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your WIC counselor for personalized help on feeding your child	
_____, MD	
Take this prescription form with you to your local WIC office. 1-800-WIC-1007 	

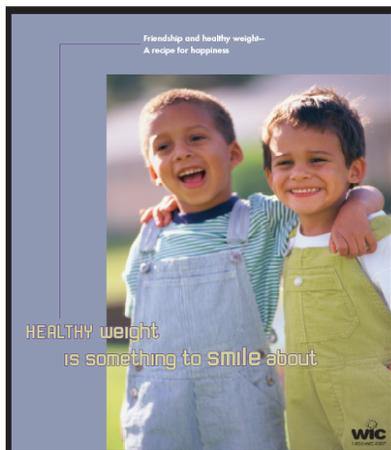
We are providing you a 'behavior change' prescription pad in your Toolkit. This prescription pad will be available free of charge to medical providers. You can contact WIC for additional supplies.

We encourage you to use this pad in order for the WIC nutrition staff to reinforce your advice:

- Write the child's name and date on the top of the pad
- Check off the diet/activity change that you and the parent discussed
- Sign the prescription
- Ask the parent to bring this prescription to their local WIC office to discuss with their WIC nutrition counselor

When the parent brings the prescription to WIC, the nutrition counselor will follow-up on the targeted behavior change and discuss with him/her solutions for incorporating the changes into their family activities.

# A Slender Looking Child is a Healthy Child



The next 6 slides will show you the messages that were developed targeting the Hispanic population. The messages can be and in many ways are universal to all families with young children. However, these messages were noted to resonate with Hispanic families the most.

- These messages are available to you in posters that you can place on your walls in your offices. Posters will be available in English and Spanish. I will be providing you with posters today.
- WIC will use a smaller educational version of the poster. (samples are included in the right hand side of your Toolkit and on the CD) This will enhance our ability to provide consistent messages between your office and WIC

The “Targeted Messages for Hispanic Families” red flyer, just after the 6 messages in your Toolkit, lists the 6 targeted messages and the background for each message.

**A slender looking child is a healthy child.** Background: To Hispanic mothers, the appearance of an overweight child means the child is healthy. They worry that if a child is too thin, he will get sick, and have health problems. Thin equates with being sickly. Parents are subject to disapproving comments from family or friends if the child is thin. This message depicts a child at a healthy weight.

**(NOTE: IF TIME IS VERY SHORT, SELECT 2-3 MESSAGES AND PRESENT BACKGROUND, OR QUICKLY SHOW THE 6 MESSAGES AND REFER TO THE RED FLYER IN THE TOOLKIT FOR THE BACKGROUND ON THE MESSAGES)**

## Developing Good Eating Habits Makes a Lifelong Difference

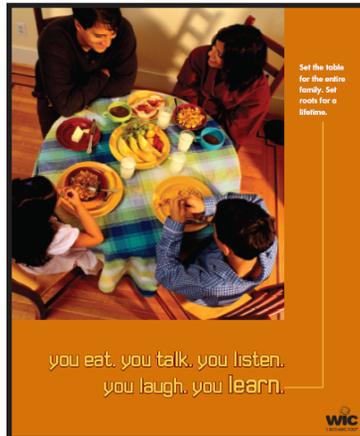


### **Developing good eating habits makes a lifelong difference**

Background: Mothers are not aware that eating patterns established early in life are directly related to lifelong health. They also are not aware that overweight in early childhood sets the stage for weight issues in adolescence and adulthood. Part of teaching good eating habits means allowing the child to eat according to his innate sense of hunger and fullness, rather than controlling the amount of food that is consumed.

This message promotes establishing healthy eating patterns that can last a lifetime.

# Eat Together as a Family

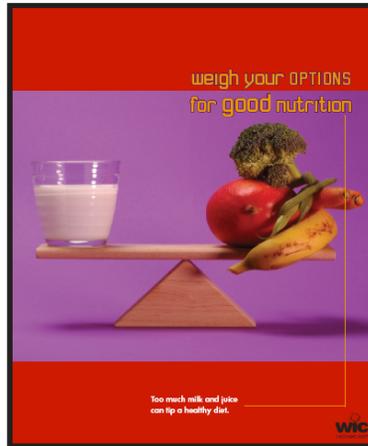


## **Eat together as a family.**

Background: Hispanic families eat together in the old country because that is the custom. Businesses close, schools send children home to eat lunch and moms prepare meals that are shared by everyone. Hispanic mothers living in the U.S. often work and have schedules that don't allow for family meals. In addition, they often feed their child separately or allow them to eat in front of the TV. Hispanic mothers know the importance of eating together.

This message encourages mothers to go back to their cultural traditions by having regular family meals.

## Offer your child a variety of food instead of a steady diet of milk and juice

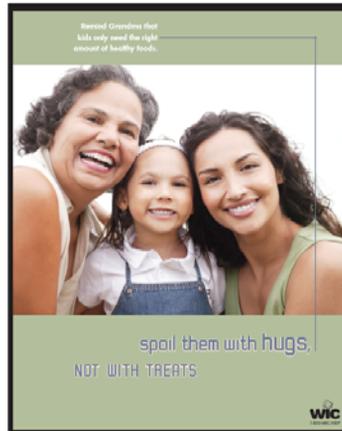


### **Offer your child a variety of food instead of a steady diet of milk and juice.**

Background: To Hispanic families, milk is a core, essential food for children. It is not unusual for children to remain on the bottle until five years of age. This leads to the consumption of large quantities of milk and juice - often up to 10 cups a day - causing the child to eat very little other foods. Hispanic mothers view milk as a protective food and a complete meal.

This message encourages drinking the right amount of milk and offering a variety of other foods for a balanced diet.

# Mom Knows What is Best for Her Child

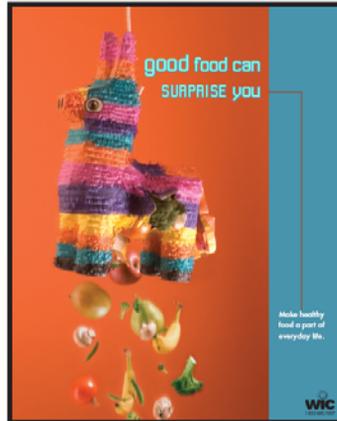


## Mom knows what is best for her child

Background: Raising children is a family affair in the Hispanic culture. Often grandparents or other relatives are the caregivers while the mother is at work. Mothers feel they lack control over their child's diet. Mothers may want to wean the child from the bottle, cut milk or limit sweets, but feel powerless when others are caring for their child. Mothers complain that all their hard work to establish good eating habits can be "undone within hours at Grandma's house".

This message encourages mothers to take control of their child's eating patterns regardless of who is feeding him and to encourage family members to show their child love in ways other than with food.

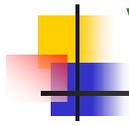
**Mothers will be surprised that children enjoy eating healthy foods—this will make mothers happy!**



**Mothers will be surprised that children enjoy eating healthy foods—and this will make mothers happy.**

Background: Mothers feel they are good mothers when they can offer food to their children that the children like and will eat. Mothers need to continue to offer a wide-range of foods because children's likes and dislikes can change constantly.

This message encourages mothers to make healthy food a part of everyday life - offering healthy food will make both mother and child happy.



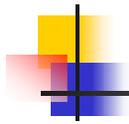
## **What can WIC do for you!**

---

### **Enhance your medical services and save you time by:**

- Providing free personalized nutrition education to your WIC-eligible families on:
  - Promoting good nutrition & feeding patterns early in life
  - Encouraging parents to be good role models
  - Discouraging screen time and encouraging more interactive activities
  - Establishing regular family meal and snack times

We can enhance your medical services and save you time by : **(READ SLIDE)**.



## What can WIC do for you? (cont.)

- Coordinate nutritional care and related issues for patients
- Provide free nutrition education posters
- Offer free behavior change ‘prescription pads’
- Supply a CD with nutrition education materials
- Offer easy access to download many of WIC materials and forms online at:

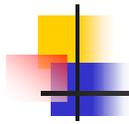
[www.mass.gov/WIC](http://www.mass.gov/WIC)

### **(READ SLIDE)**

The “What can WIC do for you” flyer(blue) on the left hand side of your Toolkit, lists all activities WIC can do for you.

A CD is included in your toolkit with:

- The 6 messages in handout format (English and Spanish)
- And, 3 FIT WIC physical activity handouts (English and Spanish):
  - Playing with your baby
  - Playing with your toddler
  - Playing with your 3-5 year old



## **WIC Needs You!**

---

- To recommend WIC for personalized counseling on feeding young children
- To reinforce “Steps to Healthy Weight in Children”
- To use the behavior change prescription pad
- To display nutrition posters in your offices

### **(READ SLIDE)**

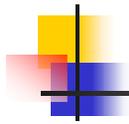
In summary-WIC needs you-we need to be working together more closely to prevent childhood overweight.

We are available for personalized counseling for your WIC-eligible patients.

The messages we will be discussing with participants are the “Steps to Healthy Weight in Children”

By using the prescription pad - WIC will be able to reinforce your advice.

Lastly, just having the posters throughout your offices - WIC participants will see that we are working together and promoting the same nutrition messages.



**Join WIC in Preventing  
Overweight in Young Children!**

**Let's Take Action Together!**

1-800-WIC-1007

**(READ SLIDE)**

**Thank you for your time and your attention.**

**Does anyone have any questions?**