

WIC Promotes Breastfeeding

WIC — the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children — provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to health care and social services for millions of low-income families. Extensive research shows that participating in WIC leads to healthier babies, more nutritious diets and better health care for children, and higher academic achievement for students.

Breastfeeding is a beneficial source of nutrition that provides the healthiest start for an infant. In addition to its nutritional benefits, breastfeeding protects against a number of illnesses and allergies. Breastfeeding is also associated with reductions in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and obesity. Moreover, it promotes a unique and emotional connection between mother and baby. Recent evidence also suggests that breastfeeding may encourage continued participation in WIC as children grow older.

WIC promotes breastfeeding as the optimal infant feeding choice and supports mothers along the way:



WIC offers new mothers breastfeeding counseling and peer support.



Breastfeeding mothers retain their eligibility for WIC benefits longer.



Mothers who exclusively breastfeed receive a food package that is larger and more varied.

While mothers participating in WIC are less likely than others to begin breastfeeding, the gap has narrowed substantially in recent years. **The percentage of infants participating in WIC who were breastfed rose by 43 percent**, from 50.2 percent to 71.8 percent, between 2002 and 2018.

50.2%

2002

71.8%

2018