

WIC Promotes Immunization and Improves Access to Health Care

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.

Children's health depends partially on their access to health care services. Children with access to health care are diagnosed and treated promptly and can obtain quality preventive care, which can enable them to avoid illness or complications. For example, immunizing children against disease helps them stay healthy and protects others.

WIC serves as a gateway to health care, connecting families to resources such as prenatal, obstetric, maternal, and pediatric care; dental care; and counseling for smoking cessation or drug and alcohol abuse.

WIC also **screens the immunization records of all infants and children under age 2** and refers parents to

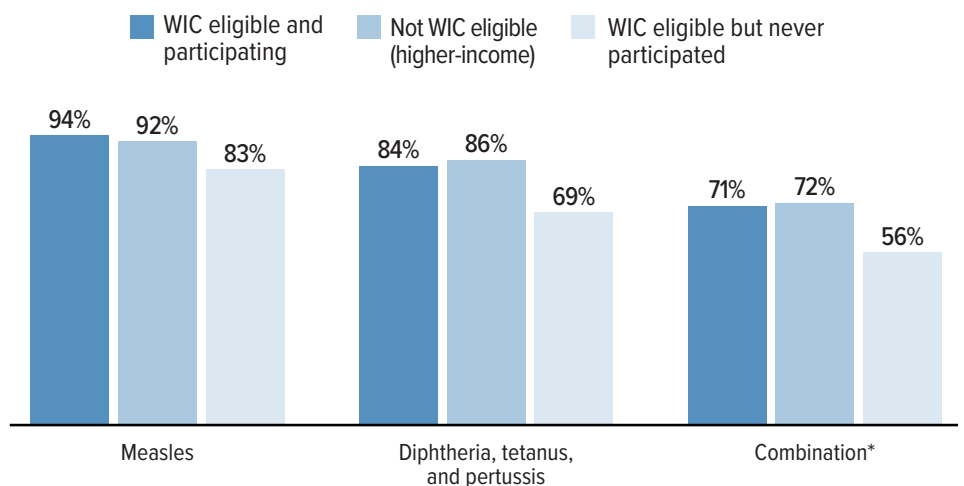
immunization services to help ensure that coverage is up to date.

Children who participate in WIC — or whose mothers do — **make more use of health care services** than non-participants. Researchers in North Carolina, for example, found that children participating in WIC received more preventive care and diagnosis and treatment of common childhood illnesses.

Nearly all (95 percent of) children whose mothers enrolled them as infants have a doctor or clinic for **routine physical examinations and wellness checks** by the time they are four years old.

Moreover, **low-income children participating in WIC have immunization rates comparable to more affluent children** and significantly higher than low-income children not participating in WIC.

Low-Income Children Participating in WIC Have Vaccination Rates Comparable to Higher-Income Children



*Protection against multiple childhood diseases, including measles, chickenpox, polio, and diphtheria.

For more information, visit: www.cbpp.org/wicworks