

WIC Supports More Nutritious Diets

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.

Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is essential to children's growth, health, and development to their full potential.

WIC **provides healthy foods** tailored to meet the nutrient needs of mothers and their children during pregnancy, breastfeeding, infancy, and childhood, such as whole grains, dairy, fish, peanut butter, beans, and fruits and vegetables.

WIC also provides **nutrition education** to parents and caretakers.

WIC has an important influence on participants' diets. Studies show that after WIC updated its food packages to reflect current dietary guidance, WIC participants bought and ate **more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy**. For example:

▶ **NEW ENGLAND:** Scanner data from a New England supermarket chain revealed that **WIC participants bought more vegetables** (up 9 percent), fruits (up 26 percent), reduced-fat milk (up 56 percent), and 100-percent whole grains (up 211 percent).

▶ **CALIFORNIA:** **Consumption of whole-grain foods rose more than 50 percent**, the share of caregivers and children who usually consumed lower-fat milk rose by 20-30 percent, and nearly 20 percent of WIC families ate more vegetables.

▶ **LOS ANGELES:** Children who participated continuously from birth to age 4 had a 10 to 12 percent **lower risk of obesity**.

▶ **NATIONWIDE:** Overall diet quality (as measured by the Healthy Eating Index) **improved twice as much among children on WIC** as children not on WIC. Children who participate consistently through their fourth year have **better quality diets** than children who leave after their first year.



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