UPDATES
TO THE WIC FOOD PACKAGE

THE NATION'S PREMIER PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is the nation's premier public health nutrition program. Serving roughly 6.7 million low-income women, infants, and children at nutritional risk across America every month, WIC provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, referrals to health and social services, and a healthy food prescription. The WIC food package provides supplemental foods designed to address the specific nutritional needs of each participant's life stage and unique circumstances.

THE SCIENCE-BASED WIC FOOD PACKAGE



As mandated by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) must reevaluate the WIC food package every 10 years. During each iteration of the food package review, USDA has commissioned the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), to conduct this scientific review. Built upon the most recently available science including the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs), the scientific strength and nutritional integrity of the WIC food package cannot be understated.

The WIC food packages -- grounded in the most recently available science -- have helped children score higher on the Healthy Eating Index and helped WIC families employ healthier shopping habits. And paired with WIC's clinic-based nutrition services, the monthly WIC benefit brings healthy foods into reach for approximately 6.7 million participants each month.

In 2017, NASEM completed its second ever review of the WIC food package with the central theme being improving balance and choice. Improving the balance and choice of the WIC food package means a food package that is not only more accurately aligned with scientific dietary guidance but also that the WIC food package can better accommodate the dietary, cultural, religious, and individual food preferences of the participant thus better reflecting the diversity of participants across the nation.The new food package rule better ensures effective utilization of food benefits thus improving the nutritional wellbeing of the nation's women, infants, and children.

In November 2022, USDA FNS issued its proposed rule based on NASEM's 2017 report to which the public had until February 2023 to respond and provide public comment. In April 2024 USDA's FNS issued a final rule updating the WIC food package, considering comments submitted from the proposed rule.

[1] Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, S.3307, U.S. Senate 111 (2010).
[2] Daepp, M. I. G., Gortmaker, S. L., Wang, Y. C., Long, M. W., & Kenney, E. L. (2019). WIC Food Package Changes: Trends in Childhood Obesity Prevalence. Pediatrics, 143(5), e20182841. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2841

IMPLEMENTATION DATES

State WIC agencies will have a 24-month implementation timeline for all provisions; however, for the CVB for all women and children participants, a 60-day implementation timeline has been given. States were already implementing higher CVB rates due to a provision in appropriations law. WIC State agencies must implement other required provisions of this rule no later than April 20, 2026. Below is a high level summary of the food package changes. The table below includes only key updates to the WIC food package and is not a comprehensive list of all changes.

FINAL CHANGES TO THE WIC FOOD PACKAGE: MONTHLY ALLOWANCES



Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Dollar value of Cash Value Benefit (CVB): • Children $8 • Pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding $10	Dollar Value of CVB is increased: • Children $26 • Pregnant, postpartum $47 • Breastfeeding $52
State agencies are only required to authorize fresh fruits and fresh vegetables, other forms optional (frozen, canned, or dried).	State agencies are required to authorize at least one other form of fruits and vegetables (frozen, canned, or dried) in addition to fresh.
Cannot purchase fresh herbs with CVB.	Can purchase fresh herbs with CVB.

JUICE

Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Amount of juice issued: • Children: 128 oz. • Pregnant and breastfeeding: 144 oz. • Postpartum: 96 oz.	Amount of juice is reduced: • Children: 64 oz. • Pregnant and breastfeeding: 64 oz. • Postpartum: 64 oz.
No option for substituting CVB in place of juice.	Substitution of juice for a $3 CVB is allowed.

MILK AND MILK SUBSTITUTES

Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Amount of milk issued: • Children 1 through 4 years: 16 qts. • Pregnant/partially breastfeeding: 16 qts. • Fully breastfeeding: 24 qts. • Postpartum: 16 qts.	Amount of milk is reduced: • Children 12 - 23 months: 12 qts. • Children 2 - 4 years: 14 qts. • Pregnant/partially breastfeeding: 22 to 16 qts. • Fully breastfeeding: 16 qts.
Lactose-free milk in food package is optional.	Lactose-free milk in food package is required.
Flavored milk is allowed in the food package.	Only unflavored milk is allowed in the food package.
1 qt. (32 oz.) of yogurt may be substituted for 1 qt. milk	2 qts (64 oz.) of yogurt may be substituted for 2 qts of milk.
Only cow's milk yogurt is allowed to be substituted for milk.	Soy-based yogurts and soy-based cheeses as substitution for milk is allowed. Plant-based yogurts and plant-based cheeses meeting specific nutritional requirements are also allowed substitutions.





INFANT FOODS

Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Amounts of Infant Cereal: • Fully breastfed: 24 oz. • Partially breastfed: 24 oz. • Fully formula-fed: 24 oz.	Amounts of Infant Cereal are Reduced: • Fully breastfed: 16 oz. • Partially breastfed: 8 oz. • Fully Formula-Fed: 8 oz.
Amounts for Infant Fruits/Vegetables: • Fully breastfed: 256 oz. • Partially breastfed: 128 oz. • Fully formula-fed: 128 oz.	Amounts of Infant Fruits/Vegetables Reduced: • Fully breastfed: 128 oz. • Partially breastfed: 128 oz. • Fully Formula-Fed: 128 oz.
Current amounts for Infant Meats: • Fully breastfed: 77.5 oz. • Partially breastfed: zero oz. • Fully formula-fed: zero oz.	Amounts for Infant Meats Reduced: • Fully breastfed: 40 oz. • Partially breastfed: zero oz. • Fully Formula-Fed: zero oz.
Only infants ages 9-11 months may receive a CVB to substitute half of the jarred infant fruits and vegetables for fresh fruits and vegetables.	Infants 6-11 months may receive CVB to substitute half (for $10 CVB), or all (for $20 CVB), of jarred fruits and vegetables for fresh, canned, or frozen forms.

WHOLE WHEAT BREAD, WHOLE GRAIN BREAD, AND WHOLE GRAIN OPTIONS

Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Amounts of Whole Wheat Bread and Whole Grain Bread: • Children: 32 oz. • Pregnant, partially breastfeeding and fully breastfeeding: 16 oz.	Amounts of Whole Wheat Bread and Whole Grain Bread are Adjusted: • Children: 24 oz. • Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding: 48 oz.
Whole grain options include: Brown rice, bulgur, oats, whole-grain barley, and whole wheat macaroni products without added sugars, fats, oils, or salt, and soft com (made from ground masa flour) or whole wheat tortillas.	Whole grain options expanded: Quinoa; wild rice; millet; triticale; amaranth; kamut; sorghum; wheat berries; tortillas made with folic acid-fortified corn masa flour; corn meal (including blue); teff; buckwheat; and whole wheat bread products (i.e., pita, English muffins, bagels, and naan) and additional whole grain options allowed.



CANNED FISH

Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Children (1 through 4 years) do not receive canned fish.	6 oz. of canned fish added to all child food packages. Children can get canned salmon, sardines, Atlantic mackerel, Chub mackerel, and light tuna.
Pregnant, postpartum, and partially breastfeeding participants do not receive canned fish; fully breastfeeding participants receive 30 ounces canned salmon, sardines, Atlantic mackerel, Chub mackerel, Jack Mackerel, and light tuna.	Add 10 ounces of canned fish to food packages for pregnant and postpartum participants and 15 ounces for partially breastfeeding participants; and revise amounts for fully breastfeeding participants from 30 to 20 ounces. Remove Jack Mackerel.

LEGUMES AND EGGS

Summary of Requirements Before Changes	Summary of Final Changes
Dry legumes allowed; canned legumes optional.	Both dried and canned legumes are required.
No substitutions are allowed for eggs.	Legumes and peanut butter as substitutes for eggs are allowed. Depending on the state, tofu may be allowed as a substitute. Nut and seed butters as a substitute for eggs may be allowed depending on the state.
	Nut and seed butters are an optional substitute for peanut butter, depending on the state.