

Pennsylvania WIC Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is a short-term intervention program designed to influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors in a targeted at-risk population. WIC provides free health screenings to all participants to determine nutritional risk. A nutritional risk is any problem that is associated with diet, growth, or medical diagnosis that might impact nutritional status. Examples include anemia, underweight, overweight, history of pregnancy complications or poor pregnancy outcomes. Nutrition risk is determined by a health professional such as a nutritionist, physician, or nurse by measuring height and weight, doing a simple blood test and reviewing each participant's medical history and dietary intake.

WIC staff members provide nutrition education and services for participants and their families to learn how to choose nutritious foods to improve health. Some topics commonly discussed include the following: Benefits and techniques of breastfeeding, healthy food choices and portion control, weaning baby to a cup, introducing solids to baby, the importance of iron in the diet, and how to manage picky eaters.

WIC Nutrition Services are important because...

- WIC monitors height, weight and blood iron to make sure infants and children grow and develop normally and pregnant women deliver healthy babies.
- Nutrition staff meets with each WIC participant individually to assess their diet, identify nutritional needs, provide individualized counseling to address those needs, and help the participant set a goal to improve their nutritional status.
- Participants receive a monthly prescription of nutritious foods tailored to supplement their dietary needs.
- The foods are specifically chosen to provide nutrients that have been scientifically shown to be lacking or needed in extra amounts in the diets of the WIC population.
- WIC encourages and supports breastfeeding. If a woman chooses not to breastfeed, then iron-fortified formula is provided as the best alternate source of essential nutrients for her infant.
- Good nutrition helps to protect the whole family against health problems.

WIC also offers several educational modules which include: the importance of family mealtimes, the need to increase physical activity, increasing fruit and vegetable intake, decreasing fats in the diet and more.

Who is eligible for wic?

WIC serves the following Pennsylvania residents:

- Pregnant women
- Breastfeeding women, for up to one year postpartum

- Women up to six months postpartum, who are not breastfeeding
- Infants and children under 5 years old, including foster children

WIC income guidelines

Current income guidelines for Healthy Beginnings (HB) and Healthy Beginnings Plus (HBP), are also listed. Refer potentially eligible individuals to these programs.

WIC INCOME GUIDELINES

Family Size	* Monthly Approximate	Annually	Welfare 185% HB & HBP
1	\$1,968	\$23,606	\$23,606
2	\$2,658	\$31,894	\$31,894
3	\$3,349	\$40,182	\$40,182
4	\$4,040	\$48,470	\$48,470
5	\$4,730	\$56,758	\$56,758
6	\$5,421	\$65,046	\$65,046
7	\$6,112	\$73,334	\$73,334
8	\$6,802	\$81,622	\$81,622

For each additional family member add:

Family Size	* Monthly Approximate	Annually	185% HB & HBP
	\$691	\$8,288	\$8,288

*Gross Income (before taxes)

Breastfeeding support

WIC offers Breastfeeding Support, Health Screenings and Referrals, Healthy Foods, and Nutrition Services.

WIC promotes breastfeeding

- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), “breastfeeding is associated with a 36% reduced risk of SIDS.” AAP further states that breastfeeding lowers the risk of ear infections, respiratory tract infections, gastroenteritis, asthma, obesity, diabetes, celiac disease and leukemia in children as well as reducing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer in women.
- Mother’s Milk and formula are NOT the same. Infant formula was initially designed as a medical substitute for babies unable to breastfeed. As part of medical nutrition therapy, formula fills a critical need. WIC provides formula to mothers who choose not to breastfeed for cultural or medical reasons.

- Mom’s milk is easy to digest, soothes the baby’s stomach, and helps the baby’s brain development.
- It is also noted that mom’s milk helps protect babies from asthma, infections, allergies, obesity, and helps develop the baby’s teeth.

NOTE: Nursing is not recommended in the following situations:

Drug and alcohol abuse, Infant: Galactosemia (rare), AIDS/HIV+, Tyrosinemia (rare), Human T-cell Leukemia (rare)

Mother’s milk for the first year

The health benefits of breastfeeding are related to how long a mother breastfeeds her baby. Although any amount of breastfeeding is better than none at all, long term breastfeeding reaps long term awards.

- Breastfeeding for a few weeks provides protection from illness while the infant is nursing.
- Breastfeeding a few months provides protection from illness and less allergies.
- Breastfeeding a year or more decreases incidence of allergies, obesity and diabetes. These are health benefits which can last a lifetime.

The benefits of breastfeeding also depend on whether the mother fully or partially breastfeeds.

- Supplementing with formula reduces the amount of breast milk an infant receives.
- The more formula a mom gives, the less breast milk her infant receives. This results in fewer health benefits and more health risks.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants receive mother’s milk only (no supplemental formula) for the first 6 months and to continue breastfeeding (along with introduction of solids) for at least the first year of life and beyond for as long as desired by mother and child.

How WIC promotes breastfeeding

- Fully breastfeeding mothers and infants receive the most WIC foods.
- WIC provides quality breast pumps to mothers who wish to provide expressed milk. The type of pump depends upon a woman’s need. The value of the pump can range from \$50 to \$300.
- WIC staff receives special training in breastfeeding support. They are able to answer questions a mother may have about breastfeeding as well as other needed support. Some questions may include: “Can nursing moms take medication?”, and “is my baby getting enough to eat?”

Healthy foods

Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

FMNP was established in 1993 to provide fresh fruits and vegetables from Pennsylvania farmers' markets to WIC participants and to expand their awareness and use of markets.

FMNP benefits

- In Pennsylvania the FMNP operates in 67 counties at over 1,000 market and farm stand sites.
- The program provides checks to WIC participants to purchase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at their local farmers' market every year between June 1 and November 30.
- Pregnant and postpartum women, breastfeeding mothers, and children age 2 by December 31st of that year are eligible.
- Contact your local WIC agency with any questions regarding FMNP.

FMNP resources

- [Fruit and Vegetable Check vs. Farmers' Market Check](#)
- [Farmers' Market Nutrition Program \(FMNP\) Food List](#)
- [Search for Farmers' Market Location Near You](#)

WIC food list

To view what foods are covered under the WIC program and which are excluded, please use the following links:

- [Food List 3/18/2019 thru 09/30/20 \(English\)](#)
- [Food List 3/18/2019 thru 9/30/20 \(Spanish\)](#)

Health screenings and referrals

WIC provides free health screenings to determine nutritional risk(s) and referrals to other health, social service, or community agencies that could help the family. A nutritional risk is any behavior associated with diet, growth, or medical diagnosis that might impact your nutritional status.

WIC staff screenings will include:

- Track weight gain progress during pregnancy.
- Weigh and measure infants and children and monitor growth.
- Review medical history and diet.
- Check blood iron levels.
- Review immunization records and refer to a health care provider if needed.
- Refer for lead testing.

The results of the WIC assessment are used to identify other health and social service organizations that could help the family. Examples would be:

- [Children's Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#)
- [Head Start](#)

[Medical Assistance \(MA\), SNAP \(food stamps\), TANF \(cash assistance\), LIHEAP \(energy assistance\)](#)
[Smoking Cessation Program](#)

Selling or trading WIC foods is illegal! If you suspect someone of abusing the WIC program, please call the WIC Hot-line: **1-800-WIC-WINS (942-9467)**.

Contact information

Bureau of WIC
625 Forster St., 7 West
Health and Welfare Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: **1-800-WIC-WINS (1-800-948-9461)**

[En Español](#)