

WIC (Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children) Fact Sheet for New York State: 2009-2010

The WIC Program is a cost-effective prevention program that provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and access to health care for low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children at nutritional risk. Each month, over 500,000 women, infants, and children throughout NYS benefit from WIC. Unfortunately, only half of those eligible for benefits actually participate in the WIC program.

Eligibility Requirements for WIC Participation...

- **Be a resident of New York State:** U.S. citizenship is NOT required.
- **Fit into one of following categories:**
 - Infant up to one year old
 - Child under age five
 - Woman who is pregnant
 - Woman who is breastfeeding up to one year postpartum
 - Woman who is not breastfeeding up to six months postpartum
- **Be 'at nutritional risk':** Applicants must be certified as 'at nutritional risk' by a health professional such as a doctor, nurse, or nutritionist. WIC local agencies may also determine an applicant's nutritional risk.
- **Meet income eligibility guidelines:** Gross household income (before taxes are withheld) must fall below the guidelines shown below. Households receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), food stamp benefits, Medicaid, free or reduced-price school meals, and/or participate in low-income Head Start programs automatically meet WIC income eligibility criteria.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES (185% of Poverty): 2009-2010

Household Size	Monthly	Yearly
1	\$1,670	\$20,036
2	2,247	26,955
3	2,823	33,874
4	3,400	40,793
5	3,976	47,712
6	4,553	54,631
7	5,130	61,550
8	5,706	68,469
For each additional household member, add	+ \$577	+ \$6,919

The Benefits of the WIC Program...

Monthly food vouchers: WIC participants receive a set of monthly food vouchers and usually receive three months worth of vouchers at a time. Vouchers list the quantity and type of food items that may be purchased at a store, usually including nutritious foods such as cereal, low-fat milk, cheese, juice, and infant formula. The WIC food package will be changing in the near future to include a wider variety of foods, increased whole grains, and more vegetables and fruits. Most supermarkets and many bodegas accept WIC vouchers.

Nutrition education and counseling: The WIC Program is designed to empower participants to improve their nutritional/health status by providing nutrition education at WIC local agencies. WIC participants may also work with nutrition counselors to identify any changes that may need to be made in one's diet.

Health screenings and referrals: Part of WIC's mission is to work toward improving child health. At WIC local agencies, participants are checked for growth, anemia, and up-to date immunizations as part of a complete nutrition assessment. WIC clinic staff also makes referrals to other health care programs and services.

The Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP): From July to mid-November, WIC participants may use additionally provided checks specifically for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. These vouchers are distributed by the WIC local agency and may be redeemed at many local farmers' markets throughout the state. FMNP promotes education about fruits and vegetables as well as encourages WIC participants to increase their daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

Breastfeeding promotion and support: WIC is committed to helping mothers breastfeed during the critical weeks after birth and beyond. Therefore, breastfeeding information and support is provided through the prenatal and postpartum periods. Many WIC local agencies have trained breastfeeding peer counselors. Food benefits are available to the mother for the first year of breastfeeding and solid foods are provided to the infant beginning at six months of age.

Obesity Prevention/Healthy Lifestyles: At the WIC local agency, participants learn creative and fun ways to involve the whole family in increased physical activity. Staying active and eating a healthy low-fat diet are important steps in combating childhood obesity.

How to Apply for WIC...

To apply for WIC benefits, pregnant women and/or mothers should visit their WIC local agency for an interview and medical assessment. Once approved for benefits, participants pick up their WIC vouchers at the WIC local agency. To find a WIC local agency, contact the New York State Department of Health by phone at 1-800-522-5006 or online at: www.nyhealth.gov/nutrition

Fact sheet prepared by the Nutrition Consortium of NYS. For additional information, please e-mail: rachel.rupright@nutritionconsortium.org or phone: (518) 436-8757 x21.