

# memo

**DATE:** November 10, 2021  
**TO:** WIC Coordinators and Local Agency Staff  
**FROM:** State WIC Staff  
**SUBJECT:** Nutritional Value of WIC Foods - #2 in the Food Package Series

This is the second in a series of memos highlighting the WIC food package. This month we focus on the nutritional value of WIC foods, including regulatory requirements and ways to increase the nutritional impact of the WIC foods.

As discussed in last month's WIC food package memo, the WIC food package is based on scientific information about the nutrition needs of WIC participants. The food package:

- Provides priority nutrients to participants to meet critical nutrition needs.
- Contributes to an overall dietary pattern consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and toddler and infant feeding practice guidelines.
- Promotes and supports successful long-term breastfeeding.

United States Department of Agriculture has established the [WIC Food Packages - Regulatory Requirements for WIC-Eligible Foods](#). WIC state agencies must use these requirements when authorizing foods on the state WIC food list. However, state agencies do not have to authorize all foods that meet WIC-eligibility. Click on the link to the regulatory requirements to learn about the specific requirements for WIC-eligible foods. Here is one example:

- **Breakfast Cereal** – Ready-to-eat or instant and regular hot cereals.
  - A minimum of 28 milligrams of iron/100 grams of dry cereal (e.g., iron = 45% U.S. RDA for adults per 1 dry ounce cereal. One ounce is a typical portion size.)
  - No more than 21.2 grams of sucrose and other sugars/100 grams of dry cereal (i.e., no more than 6 grams of sugar per 1 dry ounce.)

Using the [WIC Food Packages - Regulatory Requirements for WIC-Eligible Foods](#), can you deduce the answer to the following questions? Find the answers at the end of the memo:

- Why is Raisin Bran not a WIC-eligible cereal?
- Why are some natural peanut butters not WIC eligible?
- Why are only certain soy beverages WIC eligible?

[Section 246.10 Supplemental Foods of the WIC Federal Regulations](#) describes the maximum monthly allowances of foods, options, and substitution rates for each of the seven WIC food packages. A few items of note:

- Since the WIC food packages are designed to ensure that food benefits issued are consistent with the nutritional and health goals of the program, WIC state agencies are required to offer the maximum allowance for each food item (except for infant formula

for breastfeed infants). HuBERT defaults each food item to the maximum allowance in each food package. (CPAs may tailor the food packages to the specific nutritional needs and preferences of the individual participant.) Provision of maximum allowances is the reason the form of juice available in the child and women package is different.

- Food Package 4 for children includes 128 fluid ounces of juice, which is equivalent to two 64-ounce containers of juice.
- Food Package 5 for pregnant and mostly breastfeeding women and Food Package 7 for fully breastfeeding women include 144 fluid ounces of juice which is equivalent to three frozen concentrate juice containers, reconstituted. Similarly, Food Package 6 for postpartum women includes 96 fluid ounces, the equivalent of two frozen concentrate juice containers, reconstituted.
- To support breastfeeding, WIC staff are expected to individually tailor the amount of infant formula based on the assessed needs of the breastfeeding infant and provide the minimal amount of formula that meets but does not exceed the infant's nutritional needs (this amount will be less than the Full Nutrition Benefit.)
- The federal regulations describe allowable substitutions. Did you know that one pound of cheese may be substituted for 3 quarts of milk and 1 quart of yogurt may be substituted for 1 quart of milk? The child food package includes 16 quarts of milk (4 gallons); substitute one pound of cheese and one quart of yogurt and the fluid milk allowance is 12 quarts or 3 gallons!

There are lots of opportunities to show participants how WIC foods can help meet their health and nutrition needs. Here are just a few ideas using the [Minnesota WIC Shopping Guide](#):

- Use the symbols on the Cereals page.
  - Encourage women to select cereals high in folic acid, as identified by the FA symbol.
  - Point out the GF symbol for individuals avoiding gluten.
  - Work towards the “make half of your grains whole grains” recommendation with the cereals high in whole grain identified with a W symbol.
- If a family has never tried whole grain options, point out the many different options available from WIC. Discuss the health benefits of whole grains and offer ideas for trying one. See [WIC Quick Tips for CPAs](#) for suggestions.
- Share that an infant does not need any added sugar or salt and that is why WIC-eligible infant fruits and vegetables are plain, with no added sugar or salt.
- Encourage variety in fruit and vegetable selection. Different colors signal different nutrients, so choose a rainbow of produce to get a variety of vitamins and minerals. Help participants navigate to [Fruits and Vegetables - WIC Foods](#) on the MY MN WIC app or website to check out ideas for preparing something new.

Answers to the questions above:

- **Why is Raisin Bran not a WIC-Eligible cereal?** It contains 17 grams Total Sugars in 59 grams of cereal, exceeding the sugar limit. The sugar from the raisins is included in the total sugars. It also doesn't meet the iron requirements for WIC cereals.
- **Why are some natural peanut butters not WIC eligible?** WIC-eligible peanut butter must conform to the FDA standard of identity. If not, they are considered “peanut spreads” which are not allowable.

- **Why are only certain soy beverages WIC eligible?** To provide a nutrient profile like cow's milk, WIC-allowed soy beverage must be fortified with key nutrients such as calcium, protein, vitamin A and D, to name a few.

**Next month:** How WIC foods are authorized and some WIC state agency considerations.

## Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[WIC Food Packages - Regulatory Requirements for WIC-Eligible Foods](https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-food-packages-regulatory-requirements-wic-eligible-foods)

(<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-food-packages-regulatory-requirements-wic-eligible-foods>)

[Section 246.10 Supplemental Foods of the WIC Federal Regulations](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=a6828ac000f6e75ae4679d5beecb637c&mc=true&node=pt7.4.246&rgn=div5#se7.4.246_110) ([https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=a6828ac000f6e75ae4679d5beecb637c&mc=true&node=pt7.4.246&rgn=div5#se7.4.246_110)

[idx?SID=a6828ac000f6e75ae4679d5beecb637c&mc=true&node=pt7.4.246&rgn=div5#se7.4.246\\_110](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=a6828ac000f6e75ae4679d5beecb637c&mc=true&node=pt7.4.246&rgn=div5#se7.4.246_110))

[Minnesota WIC Shopping Guide](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/vendor/fpchnng/shopguide.pdf)

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[WIC Quick Tips for CPAs](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/fpchange/tips/index.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/fpchange/tips/index.html>)

[Fruits and Vegetables - WIC Foods](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/foods/fruitsveg.html)

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