

Section 7.2: Allowed WIC Foods

UPDATED 02/2022

References: 7 CFR 246.10, State Rules

Policy: Local agency staff must be familiar with and inform WIC participants of the foods allowed in the MN WIC Program.

Purpose: To assure that WIC participants receive the appropriate foods and understand how those foods meet their specific nutritional needs.

Background: WIC federal regulations specify the types of foods allowed in each food package category, and the nutritional criteria foods must meet to be included. For some foods, additional criteria are specified in Minnesota state rules. State WIC staff review product specifications of individual food items to evaluate conformance to the nutritional requirements stipulated in federal regulations. Refer to [Exhibit 7-A: Minimum Requirements for Supplemental Foods](#). Food items that meet the nutritional requirements are then evaluated for price, availability, and participant preference.

Procedures:

1. Local agency staff must know the food categories available through WIC, and the nutritional contribution of those foods.
2. Staff should be familiar with the specific types and brands of foods allowed in Minnesota. Refer to the [WIC Shopping Guide](#).
3. Local agencies must use the most current version of the [WIC Shopping Guide](#).

Guidance

- Explain to participants that the foods provided by WIC are supplemental.
 - WIC foods are good sources of selected nutrients often lacking in many diets.
 - WIC offers more healthful forms of foods (such as low-fat milk, fruits without sugar, cereals with less sugar, etc.) to promote healthier family meals.
 - Foods provided by WIC enable families to spend their food dollars on other foods they might wish to buy.

SECTION 7.2: ALLOWED WIC FOODS

- Provide a [WIC Shopping Guide](#) to each participant/family or demonstrate how to access it through the WIC App. Explain the food options that will be provided with their food benefits. Discuss the following:
 - Types and amounts of foods the participant will be receiving.
 - How to identify those foods in the grocery store, including when appropriate: brand name, container size, how to read labels to find pertinent information, etc. For harder to find foods, explain where in the store the food is located.
- Use visuals for key foods whenever possible to show which WIC foods are allowed.
 - Useful education tools include pictorials, product labels or online label print-outs, empty packages/cartons, and the *WIC Shopping Guide*. For example, use a baby food jar to demonstrate how to determine whether the item has added sugar (i.e., using the *Ingredients* list rather than the *Nutrition Facts Label*).
 - Visuals are especially important when educating participants on how to choose more complicated items such as WIC-allowed juices, canned fruits and vegetables, canned beans, infant foods, and soy beverage type.
 - Ask open-ended questions and have the participant demonstrate understanding.
 - Be familiar with availability of brands of WIC foods at local grocery stores. For example, a vendor may only carry a few brands of WIC-allowed bread. This information, along with a picture or sample package to show participants, will make it easier for them to identify the correct food item at the store.
- Explain the food benefits, and how to use them at the grocery store, to new participants and out-of-state transfers. Provide a list of local vendors or show how to find that information with the WIC App. Participants should understand:
 - What to do if the WIC item is not in stock or there is not enough on the shelf.
 - Procedures to follow when purchasing WIC foods with the WIC Card at the check-out register.
 - What to do and/or who to call if there is a problem.
 - No substitutions are allowed. WIC foods may not be returned to the store for cash refund or exchanged for another item. *Exception:* if the purchased item was found to be damaged or spoiled, it may be returned to the store for replacement with the same item, depending on store policy.
 - The participant is responsible for instructing proxies on how to shop with the WIC Card and select the correct foods.
- For returning participants, ask open-ended questions to determine how their shopping experience was, if they were able to find the WIC foods they wanted, what kind of foods they are buying, etc. This can lead to opportunities for building on a participant's current food practices, as well as for correcting any misunderstandings.

SECTION 7.2: ALLOWED WIC FOODS

- Communicate and partner with local vendors about food package issues, changes, and questions. Local Agencies and vendors can assist and support each other in ensuring that WIC foods are available for participants.
 - Visit grocery stores and introduce yourself to the manager. See what foods and brands are available in your area.
 - Ask if the manager or staff have any questions or concerns about WIC foods or participants. Find out if there are certain items that participants have greater difficulty in identifying at the store, and discuss how the Local Agency and the vendor can work together to address those issues.
 - Share information that may be helpful to the vendor, such as when WIC clinic days are scheduled, WIC food items that may be in high demand, etc.
 - If there are frequently - requested WIC food items not currently stocked, ask if the vendor can order those items.
- Refer to Food Package resources:
 - [UPC Codes – MN WIC APL \(Approved Products List\)](#): a complete list of all WIC-allowed foods identified by brand name.
 - [Food Package Information](#) website for Local Agencies: additional information about the Minnesota WIC Food Package.
 - [Minimum Stock Requirements \(Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin or Ramsey\)](#) or [Minimum Stock Requirements \(stores outside Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin or Ramsey\)](#): a listing of the WIC foods (and quantities) vendors are required to stock or must order upon participant request.
 - [WIC vendor website](#): additional information about vendor topics.
- Contact the state WIC office with questions or comments about specific foods.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Exhibit 7-A: Minimum Requirements for Supplemental Foods](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/exhbts/ex7/7a.pdf>)

[WIC Shopping Guide](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/foods/guides.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/foods/guides.html>)

[UPC Codes – MN WIC APL \(Approved Products List\)](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/vendor/fpchng/upc/apl.xlsx>)

[Food Package Information](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/index.html#foodpackage>)

[Minimum Stock Requirements \(Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin or Ramsey\)](#)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/vendor/appinfo/minstcktr_1.pdf)

[Minimum Stock Requirements \(stores outside Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin or Ramsey\)](#)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/vendor/appinfo/minstcktr_2.pdf)

SECTION 7.2: ALLOWED WIC FOODS

WIC vendor website (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/vendor/index.html>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us. To obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942