

# WIC FAQs FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS & STAFF



## How does the Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program support maternal and child health?

- WIC serves as a gateway to preventive healthcare. WIC screens for immunizations, growth and development, iron status, feeding patterns and more.
- WIC offers personalized nutrition education that assesses health and diet while addressing responsive feeding. WIC offers group and online nutrition, feeding and lactation classes. Staff use motivational interviewing to help participants meet health goals.
- WIC enrolls income-eligible fathers, grandparents, foster families and guardians with children under age five.
- WIC provides a nutrient-dense food package for those who are:
  - pregnant
  - postpartum
  - breastfeeding or needing lactation support
  - infants
  - children through age 4

## What nutrition services does WIC provide for patients with a medical diagnosis?

- WIC provides personalized, nutrition education and support. WIC does not provide medical nutrition therapy.
- Registered dietitians offer nutrition counseling for those with a medical diagnosis, but these participants need additional support outside of WIC.

## Who funds and administers WIC?

WIC is federally funded, administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Program and is authorized under the Child Nutrition Act. WIC is not an entitlement program, meaning its funding is reauthorized every other year. WIC is a public health nutrition program located primarily within county health departments.

## What is the value of breastfeeding in WIC?

WIC sees long-term, exclusive breastfeeding as the desired norm, and supports patients in the following ways:

- All WIC staff are trained to provide basic breastfeeding and lactation education and support.
- WIC Peer Counselors provide parent-to-parent support helping participants overcome common feeding challenges.
- WIC offers professional lactation support by staffing Internationally Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) in one-third of our clinics. These professionals have expertise in clinical management of complex lactation problems.

## How can my patient get a breast pump?

- Healthcare providers play an important role in assisting patients obtain a breast pump through Oregon Health Plan (OHP) or private insurance. For those without insurance or in special circumstances, WIC offers different breast pumps (multi-user, personal or manual) depending on the patient's need. Circumstances could include when a parent and infant are separated due to work or school, or when a medical condition requires pumping to sustain lactation.

### Does WIC provide infant formula?

Yes. WIC is required to provide a supplemental amount of infant formula for those who are unable to, or choose not to breastfeed.

### What if extra formula is needed from WIC?

WIC is a supplemental, public health program and not meant to provide the full, long-term nutritional need for participants. In most cases, WIC is not able to provide additional food or formula.

### How are WIC infant formulas selected?

WIC is federally mandated to use a competitive bid process as a means of cost containment. The current contract for WIC formula is with Abbott Nutrition for milk-based and soy-based formulas: Similac Advance, Similac Soy Isomil, Similac Sensitive and Similac Total Comfort.

### What is a medical formula under WIC?

Medical formulas refer to any formula or oral supplement that is not the standard infant contracted WIC formula. Issuance requires a signed [WIC Medical Documentation Form](#) from a licensed healthcare provider. WIC does not supply metabolic or tube feeding formulas. Please see the [Oregon WIC Formulary](#) file under the WIC medical documentation section for the full list of offered WIC formulas.

### Who is the primary payer of medical formulas?

Oregon Health Plan (OHP) is the primary payer for formulas and nutrition supplements covered by Medicaid to treat (medically necessary and appropriate to correct or ameliorate a condition) women, infants and children who are enrolled in both OHP and WIC. See [OHA memo and Home Enteral/Parenteral Nutrition and IV Services Rule \(6\)](#) for more information.

If an OHP patient also has private insurance, the request for medical formula must first go through the private insurer. Coverage can be requested through Medicaid only if private insurance denies.

### How does a healthcare provider initiate an order for medical formula?

OHP providers need to submit a prior authorization request through the patient's CCO. If you have a patient that is an OHP fee-for-service member, consult the [EPSDT provider guide](#).

### Did you know?

- WIC participants can get organic fruits and veggies with WIC.
- There are WIC food alternatives for special diets and WIC offers dairy and dairy alternative food and beverages.
- WIC follows the AAP recommendations of 4 ounces or less of juice for children.
- WIC foods are purchased with a debit card and not paper vouchers.

### How can WIC and healthcare staff partner to coordinate care? Healthcare professionals can:

- Engage with WIC dietitians to have critical dialogs about patients with greater medical complexity or about formula.
- Connect with WIC for breastfeeding resources.
- Encourage staff to refer income-eligible or OHP-enrolled pregnant women or families with kids under five to WIC. WIC will refer patients to OHP.
- Collaborate with your local WIC program to determine the best way to share information on growth, lead screening and/or to share iron status data. Let WIC know what data you are interested in receiving.
- Communicate with WIC coordinators to match messaging around responsive feeding, healthy weight and more!

### How can I get more information on WIC?

Contact your [county WIC clinic](#). Visit our [WIC Resources for Medical Providers](#) webpage.