



## GROWING HEALTHY FUTURES

### “I want to take your **blood...** to check your hemoglobin!”



In WIC, we are always talking about blood, but with Halloween around the corner, you have the perfect opportunity to use your vampire voice to talk about the new HemoCue machines you received. WIC clinics across the state are switching to the HemoCue 301 in the next few months. The new machines have some great advantages such as faster readings and cuvettes that last longer.

It is also a great time to talk about the correct technique for collecting that blood sample. The HemoCue 301 training includes a review of the important steps for taking a good blood sample and getting an accurate reading. Here is a picture of correct technique.



#### Here are some common blood sample errors we see:

- ◆ “Milking” the finger rather than just squeezing at the first knuckle.
- ◆ “Double dipping” the cuvette rather than filling it from a single drop of blood.
- ◆ Forgetting to wipe off the first 2-3 drops of blood before filling the cuvette.

#### How’s your technique?

Take the HemoCue training on iLearn to double-check your skills and to learn how to use and care for the new equipment prior to use.



### 2009 WIC food package updates improved maternal and infant health outcomes

From the CalWICA newsletter

Updates to the WIC food package in 2009 to incorporate more fruits and vegetables appear to have improved both maternal and infant health outcomes, [according to a recent analysis](#) of more than 2 million mother-child pairs in California. Lower rates of preeclampsia were seen after the revised WIC food package was introduced, and there was less excess weight gain during pregnancy. The effects on infants born to mothers receiving the updated package were smaller, but still beneficial. They tended to have higher average gestational ages at birth, were less likely to be small for gestational age, and were less likely to have birth weights under 2,500 grams. This indicates that at a critical juncture in the course of life, WIC policy can be a significant lever to decrease health disparities between high-risk women and children.



# I'm glad you asked- Subscription food allergy products and more

Recently, some new parents in Oregon have received infant allergy product samples by mail. The products promise an easy way to expose common food allergens to infants. These products are sold in monthly subscription boxes of individual packets containing trace amounts of wheat, tree nuts, sesame, shellfish, milk, fish, soy, peanut and egg. Parents are instructed to mix these packets into foods like cereals, yogurt, or mashed vegetables each day, to prevent allergies. These products are expensive and are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The companies promoting these products do not have the backing of the medical community as there is not yet peer-reviewed research or randomized control trials using scientifically rigorous methods. More information is available [here](#). Based on our current knowledge of at home allergen treatments, we do not recommend these products for families.

On a related note, there is a new drug called Palforzia in the headlines. The company that developed this drug is working to gain FDA approval so consumers can purchase this product with a prescription from a health care provider. Palforzia is a standardized peanut powder product intended to reduce allergic reactions to peanuts for people ages 4 to 17. Patients would take doses of peanut protein over the course of several months, leading some people to experience a decrease in their body's immune response to peanuts. This desensitizing treatment is not a cure and doesn't work for everyone—but the drug trials indicate that this drug may help allergic reactions in some people. Further reading is available from the Washington Post [here](#), the FDA advisory group meeting presentation notes [here](#), and from NPR [here](#). This information is being shared for educational purposes and does not imply an endorsement of any product. Encourage WIC participants to talk with their health care providers and WIC nutritionists if they have concerns about food allergies.

**Bottom line:** If a participant has concerns about food allergies, we recommend that they work with their health care providers and WIC nutritionists as needed.

Photo by [Corleto Peanut butter](#) on [Unsplash](#)



## Check in on shopping success

Shopper education has 2 phases: 1) instructing new participants on how to shop; and, 2) checking in with current participants on how shopping is going.

We know that a difficult shopping experience decreases the chance that a participant will stay on WIC, but more importantly it can keep them from getting the nutrition benefits of the WIC foods. Many times, shopping issues can be resolved easily, if we know what they are.

How do you “check in” on shopping? Here are a few ideas.

- Get in the habit of asking about shopping experiences every time you talk with participants.
- Explore more than just if they are using the WICShopper App.
- Use the customer service lines you hear when shopping like “Were you able to find everything you needed the last time you shopped for WIC benefits?”
- “What WIC benefits are you having trouble buying, if any?”
- “Tell me what it has been like using your WIC card at the store.”



# Lead poisoning prevention - When treats can be tricks!



October 20-26 is National Lead Poisoning Prevent Week. To learn more about this topic we reached out to our friends at the OHA Environmental Health Section. [Their website](#) has great tips and resources.

Let's talk about some surprising places children can be exposed to lead:

- ◆ **Face paint.** Families of all cultures paint faces during celebrations. Face paints may contain toxic chemicals, like lead, which could be absorbed through a child's skin or accidentally ingested—sometimes things get messy when a child is in face paint! The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates color additives, and manufacturers of face paints must clearly list ingredients on the product.
  - **Here's what families can do:** Before painting skin, check the [FDA-approved color additives list](#), read the labels on face paint kits and avoid using it if there's a color additive not approved by the FDA.
  
- ◆ **Don't be tricked by your treats!** Imported candies and spices may contain lead that could spike a child's blood lead level. Imported candy may contain lead due to production practices, or ink from candy wrappers may contain lead that gets into the imported candy. You cannot tell if a food, candy, medicine or spice contains lead by looking at or tasting it. You can read more and see examples [here](#).
  - **Here's what families who eat imported candies can do:** request a simple blood lead level test as a precaution. Where in your county can children get their lead levels tested?
  
- ◆ **Sparkly jewelry is so much fun!** Yet, many imported, colorful [costume jewelry](#) (like Mardi Gras beads) may be made with lead-based paint. Wearing toy or costume jewelry will NOT elevate a child's blood lead level. Chewing or sucking on lead-contaminated jewelry will cause blood lead levels to rise.
  - **Here's what families can do:** prevent children from chewing or sucking on metal items like keys, necklaces, amulets and painted jewelry.



## October is a busy month in public health!

Promote flu shots for pregnant and postpartum women  
The [October CD Summary](#) gives specific suggestions for this years flu vaccine.

### SIDS Awareness Month

This is a great time to promote safe sleep for babies. Check out the [OHA resource webpage](#).

### [Health Literacy Month](#)

What can you do to make written materials in your office easier to use?

### Domestic Violence Awareness Month

WIC is aware of this issue every day, but October is a good time to lend your support to partners working on this issue.



## Nutrition can help reduce lead poisoning!

A varied diet can help prevent lead from being absorbed by the body. Here are some tips to share with families:

- ◆ **Calcium reduces lead absorption** and can keep bones and teeth strong. Calcium is in milk, yogurt, cheese, and leafy green vegetables like spinach.
- ◆ **Iron blocks lead from being absorbed** and is found in beans, peanut butter, meats, fish, eggs and dark green leafy greens.
- ◆ **Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron better** and is found in citrus fruits and colorful peppers.

For more information on lead safety click [here](#).