

WIC FAQs FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS



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 breastfeeding classes. Staff use motivational interviewing to help participants meet goals.
- WIC enrolls income-eligible fathers, grandparents, foster families and guardians with children under age five.
- WIC provides a nutrient-dense food package for pregnant, postpartum women, breastfeeding women, infants and children.

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 women in the following ways:

- All WIC staff are trained to provide basic breastfeeding education and support.
- WIC Peer Counselors provide mother-to-mother support in seven Oregon counties helping women overcome common breastfeeding 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. *An IBCLC certification takes 500 to 1000 clinical practice hours, 90 hours of lactation education and the passing of an exam. There are currently 20 IBCLCs working in Oregon WIC clinics.*
- WIC protects breastfeeding by not routinely issuing formula to breastfeeding infants in the first 30 days.

Why doesn't WIC routinely provide formula for the first 30 days of life?

A major goal of WIC is to improve the health of mothers, infants and children; therefore, WIC families are encouraged to breastfeed infants unless medically contraindicated. The first days and weeks after delivery are a critical time for mothers and infants to establish breastfeeding. Formula supplements interfere with milk production and make learning to breastfeed difficult. For this reason, WIC does not routinely provide formula to breastfeeding infants in the first 30 days.

Why does WIC provide formula?

The USDA requires WIC to provide a supplemental amount of infant formula when mothers do not breastfeed. If the infant is receiving formula, WIC staff discuss the decision to not breastfeed with the mother, determining the reasons for her decision, and to problem-solve when needed.

How are WIC bid 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 and Similac Soy Isomil.

When do I complete and send WIC a Medical Documentation Form (MDF)?

Medical providers can fill out a MDF to request an alternate formula when a patient has a medical need or diagnosis. This form can be found on the Oregon WIC website (healthoregon.org/wic) under [Resources for Medical Providers](#).

How can my patient get a breast pump?

Healthcare providers are expected to assist a breastfeeding mother by providing documentation to obtain breast pumps through Oregon Health Plan (OHP) or her private insurer. For women without insurance, WIC offers different breast pumps (multi-user, personal or manual) depending on the patient's need and special circumstance. Circumstances could include when a mother and infant are separated due to work or school, or when a medical condition requires pumping to sustain lactation.

Did you know?

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

How can WIC and healthcare staff partner to better 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 back to their doctors.
- Collaborate with your WIC program to determine the best way to share information (growth and 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 coordinator](#). Visit our [WIC Resources for Medical Providers](#) webpage.

This document was adapted from California WIC