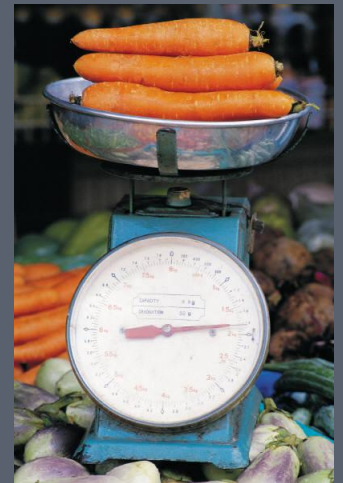




# THE NEW WIC FOOD PACKAGES: WHAT'S THE IMPACT WITH PARTICIPANTS?

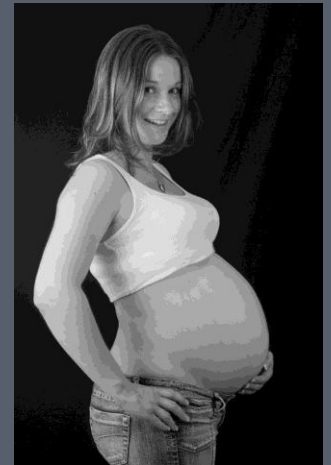
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Oregon WIC Program



# THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

Oregon WIC serves:

- 40% of pregnant women
- 1/3 of children under age 5
- Average monthly caseload of 113,000 participants



# What does WIC provide?

Nutrition Education



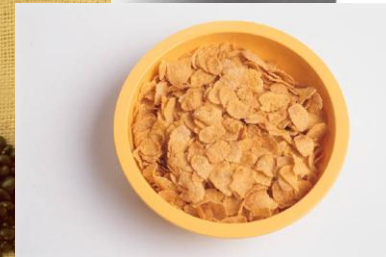
Breastfeeding Support



Referrals



Supplemental Foods



# Vouchers Issued for Specific Foods



Participants are issued paper vouchers detailing food type and quantity

# Voucher are redeemed at local stores



Grocery stores are paid regular retail prices for foods purchased. Cash back or substitutions are not allowed with WIC vouchers.

# Major Changes in the WIC food packages!



# 'Fresh Choices' has expanded the WIC Market Basket!



# Add fruits and vegetables

- Cash value-vouchers (\$6, \$8, or \$10) for fruits and vegetables for children and women
- Participants may choose from a wide variety of **fresh** and **frozen** fruits and vegetables
- White potatoes and herbs are not allowed
- Oregon chose not to include canned produce
- Organic is okay





# Add whole grains

- Whole grain options:
  - ▣ 100% Whole wheat bread
  - ▣ Brown rice
  - ▣ Soft corn tortillas
- Can combine items if voucher quantity allows
- 16 oz or 32 oz per month



# No Formula Policy for BF Infants

Infants who are breastfeeding fully or partially will not be issued formula within the first month of life



Moms that exclusively BF get extra foods in their WIC package

Moms that are minimally breastfeeding no longer receive food benefits after six months

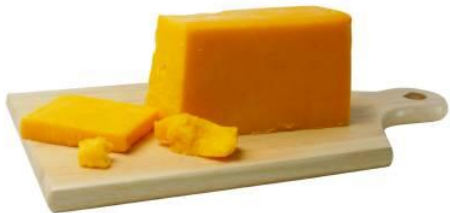
Infants that are exclusively breastfeeding at 6 months and over get jarred infant meats in addition to jarred fruits & veggies

# Other Food Package Changes

Reduced quantities of milk and cheese for children and women to cut saturated fat

Whole milk no longer allowed for women or children over 2 years of age

Soy milk allowed as dairy substitute with prescriptions from child's doctor



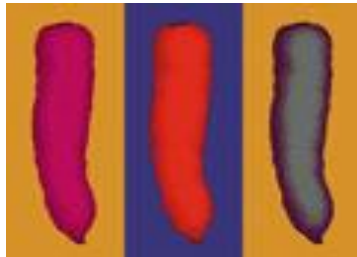
# How are families using the fruit & veggie voucher?



Families mainly reported buying “staples” vs. buying more expensive or exotic “treats”



Children’s preferences as well as weekly planning for meals & price drove purchases



Respondents were evenly split about whether they weigh or count to figure how much to buy

# What did they tell us about how and why they buy?



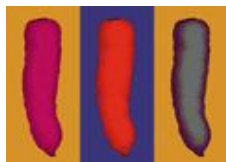
“I usually let my kids pick out bananas. I get 1 peach and 1 banana for each kid for each day. I buy lettuce for salad.”



“I was making spaghetti and salad. The cuties (mandarins) were on for \$2.99.”



“The way I choose is whatever the kids like. One of my daughters really loves broccoli and salad.”



“I try to guess how much it costs. With apples start off with 4; usually get a bunch of bananas. Tomatoes, 1 or 2 for salad. I never really use the scale.”



“I usually weigh them, add them up and get as close as I can.”

# Is it helping families buy more?

“Knowing that a lot of people are really watching their budget these days, if you didn’t have the fruit and veggie voucher, would you still have put all those things (listed produce items) in your cart?”

## **The majority said they’d buy the same amount, reducing other food items**

“I might have to buy less snacks or convenience foods. I buy my meat & dairy first, convenience next.”

“Depends on how much money I have. I can use Food Stamps to get the rest.”

## **Those that said they wouldn’t would cut back on more expensive items**

“I would put back the strawberries and grapes, mainly due to cost. I tend to be a cheap shopper because I grew up poor. Normally I would get lettuce to stretch the meals but the strawberries looked so good.”

# Farm Direct Program

## A Story of Two Vouchers

- ❖ The Farm Direct Nutrition Program (a.k.a Farmers' Market) program pre-dates the fruit and veggie voucher
- ❖ WIC clients receive \$20 total to use from June to October
- ❖ Unfortunately there is only enough funding for about 1/3 of participants to receive these
- ❖ WIC participants can now take fruit & veggie voucher to farmers market
- ❖ About 1% of fruit & veggie voucher redemptions have occurred at FM or stands



# How are families using the whole grain option?



Whole wheat bread is the most commonly purchased whole grain item (74%)  
Corn tortillas are a distant second (38%)



19% of families bought no other grains during the referred shopping trip



47% also bought flour tortillas  
36% also bought white rice  
25% also bought white bread  
23% also bought another kind of bread  
4% also bought whole wheat tortillas



# Are families eating more whole grains due to the WIC options?

“Thinking back to before WIC started offering a whole grain option, would you say your family mainly bought: whole wheat bread, white bread, bread other than wheat or white, or didn’t buy much bread?”

**45% reported buying whole wheat bread prior to the voucher vs. 76% now**



“My husband still eats the white bread but me and my kids like the wheat. We mostly eat wheat now.”

“We’re buying whole wheat vs. the nuts and seeds because its on the voucher.”

**Corn tortilla purchases held steady at 36% prior vs. 38% currently**



“The tortillas are more versatile and my family doesn’t eat whole wheat bread because they don’t like it. We like white bread.”

**Only 4% reported using vouchers for brown rice vs. 8% who ate it prior**

“My kids don’t eat much ethnic foods like tortillas and only eat rice with a lot of soy sauce.”



# What the impact on Breastfeeding?

## Almost all moms intended to breastfeed prenatally

“ I was very excited to do it. That was my main goal to breastfeed.”

## Moms view the WIC program as Pro-Breastfeeding

“ They said it was the best milk. They said it was important for me and the baby. And it helps you lose your baby fat. They also say you have a better bond with your baby.”

## Few remembered the no-formula policy

“ I hadn't heard. I knew BF was important.”  
“I understand its to help more women BF in the first month.”



# But I introduced (some) formula when and why...?

Hospital  
Day 2

“They sent in a lactation woman for extra help in the hospital. I ended up getting the tube over my boob (SNS), and then she got a little bit of formula.”

3 Weeks  
At Home

“I wasn’t producing enough. I wanted to but I dried up. I tried everything—skin to skin, I called WIC, mothers’ groups and tried everything they said. I drank milk and ate cheese.”

2<sup>nd</sup>  
month

“It was easier for me. I would give it to him when I decided I didn’t have enough milk.” (seemed hungry if he was crying)

4<sup>th</sup>  
month

“I was about to start a temp job. I didn’t know if I could pump enough.”

# So where does WIC come back in...?

Most women reported giving formula for weeks or months before approaching WIC for formula

Most reported not asking WIC for a specific amount of formula but rather responding to staffs' questions about their breastfeeding status and amount of formula given, and then being given a quantity based on their answers

Not many reported that WIC staff tried to counsel them back to exclusive BF

Many reported getting formula coupons in the mail, at cash register along with their receipt as well as just buying it on their own

# Questions

