[WIC (Woman, Infants and Children) Program](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic/professionals.htm) is a supplemental food and nutrition program for low-income women, infants and children who are at risk for nutrition-related health problems. WIC was established as a pilot program in 1972 to address high infant mortality, under growth and severe anemia commonly seen in low-income children by pediatricians working in public health. The program demonstrated a marked reduction in growth stunting and severe iron deficiency anemia and eventually became a nationwide program in 1974. WIC enables parents to properly feed their children during essential periods of growth and development. The program is federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture and administered in Wisconsin by the Department of Health Services. Services are provided by local WIC agencies in each county.

**Research Shows that WIC Works:**

[Babies](https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/wics-role-reducing-infant-mortality.pdf)

* Prenatal WIC participation is associated with lower infant mortality rates.
* WIC prenatal care benefits reduce the rate of low birth weight babies by 25% and very low birth weight babies by 44%.
* WIC infants are in better health than eligible infants not participating in WIC.

[Children](https://s3.amazonaws.com/aws.upl/nwica.org/2018-wic-children-in-wic.pdf)

* WIC nutrition education improves fiber, lower fat milk and fruit consumption among WIC families.
* Children in both WIC and Medicaid better meet their healthcare needs than children only enrolled in Medicaid.

**Who Qualifies?**

* Pregnant women
* Postpartum mothers up to 6 months
* Breastfeeding mothers up to 1 year postpartum
* Infants and children to age 5 years

**The 4 Pillars of the WIC Public Health Program:**

**1. Nutrition Education**

WIC health professionals work with families to address healthy eating habits, dietary needs, meal planning and feeding concerns. Personalized nutrition consultation is provided by Registered Dietitians with ongoing assessments and routine follow-ups.

Nutrition counseling for infants and children is based on the current American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines, which include the following:

* No juice under age 12 months; no juice from bottles
* Maximum 4 oz of 100% fruit juice daily over age 1 (counting as a fruit serving)
* Whole milk age 12-23 months
* 2% milk age 12-23 months when WIC nutritionist assesses and documents need
* 1% or skim milk starting at age 24 months

While many pediatricians counsel patients to avoid fruit juice even beyond age 1, USDA rules currently require WIC to provide 100% juice as part of the food package.

**36**

WIC nutritionists recommend limiting juice consumption to the AAP-recommended amount of no more than 4 ounces per day and emphasize the importance of eating whole fruits and vegetables.

**2. Healthy Food**

The [list of WIC approved foods](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic/approved-foods.htm) was updated nationally in 2009 and includes more foods that are culturally appropriate for the Hispanic population, which makes up over 25% of WIC clients. There remains, however, only minimal flexibility in the prescribed foods.

Food Benefits

* Fruits and vegetables
* Whole grains
* Low-fat dairy
* Iron rich foods
* Infant foods

Formulas and Medical Nutritionals

* Standard contract formulas

**29**

* Medical formulas for infants and children with special needs
* Medical foods for children and women with special needs

**3. Breastfeeding support**

WIC provides moms with one-on-one breastfeeding support and mother-to-mother support with WIC Peer Counselors, designed to help initiate and prolong breastfeeding. All WIC clinics have staff with advanced training and certification in breastfeeding support. Breastfeeding mothers receive enhanced food benefits and are eligible for WIC up to 1-year postpartum.

**4. Referrals**

WIC connects families to health and community services, resources and programs based on their unique needs. WIC dietitians encourage participants to see providers and keep their appointments.

Families are eligible if they have income up to 185% of the federal poverty level or

are enrolled in foster care, kinship care, or FoodShare. Many families enrolled in Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus also qualify for WIC.

52% A family of 3 with an income of

Of Wisconsin infants qualify $37,000 will qualify for WIC.

for WIC.

Fathers, guardians and foster parents may apply for WIC for their children.

[WIC Eligibility and Income Guidelines](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic/income-guidelines.htm) | [WIC Nondiscrimination Statement](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wic/non-discrimination.htm)

**37**