



News for Immediate Release

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Secretary of Health Announces New, Healthier Food Choices Available through Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program

Most Significant Change to Pennsylvania's WIC Program in 35 Years

Lancaster – Health Secretary Everette James today unveiled the new food packages available to pregnant women, new mothers, and children under the age of five as part of Pennsylvania's Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, program.

"The changes to the WIC food packages are significant and will improve the nutrition of Pennsylvania's new mothers and young children," Secretary James said during a visit to the Community Action Program in Lancaster. "It is critically important to give kids a healthy start so they can grow into healthy adults. Now, WIC participants will have even more choices to support healthy eating habits."

WIC provides supplemental foods to meet the special nutritional needs of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants and children up to five years of age who are at nutritional risk.

Some of the changes in the new food packages include:

- Addition of fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned);
- Addition of soy-based beverage and tofu as milk alternatives;
- Addition of whole grains (cereals, bread, oats, brown rice and soft tortillas);
- Reductions in some food allowances, including milk, eggs and juice;
- Elimination of infant juice; and
- Low-fat milk only for children two years and up and all women.

The new choices will help WIC consumers overcome major health and nutrition risks associated with obesity and diets lacking in fiber and whole grains. The changes will help parents provide healthier meals for their children that will also help them to maintain a healthy weight.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, obese children and adolescents are at risk for health problems during their youth and later as adults. For example, obese children and adolescents are more likely to have risk factors associated with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes.

The new guidelines will also increase the quantity and quality of food packages to help support breastfeeding mothers and their infants. The well-documented benefits of breastfeeding children include a lower risk for conditions such as ear and

respiratory infections, type 2 diabetes and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. For mothers, the benefits of breastfeeding include a decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancers, as well as type 2 diabetes.

The new WIC food packages will be better aligned with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The Pennsylvania WIC Program is a federal program operated by the United States Department of Agriculture, or USDA. On Dec. 6, 2007, USDA published the final rules revising the WIC food package rules, and charged all state agencies to have them in place by Oct. 1, 2009.

To learn more about the WIC Program and its new food packages, visit www.pawic.com or www.health.state.pa.us/familyhealth. Information also is available by calling, toll-free, 1-800 WIC WINS (1-800-942-9467).

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