

WIC Formula Changes Questions and Answers

June 18, 2012

1. What is WIC?

WIC provides specifically selected nutritious foods, nutrition education (including breastfeeding Promotion and support), and referrals to health and other social services to participants at no charge. WIC serves low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk.

WIC is not an entitlement program; i.e., Congress does not set aside funds to allow every eligible individual to participate in the program. Instead, WIC is a Federal grant program for which Congress authorizes a specific amount of funding each year for program operations. The Food and Nutrition Service, which administers the program at the Federal level, provides these funds to WIC State agencies (State health departments or comparable agencies) to pay for WIC foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, and administrative costs.

2. Why does WIC use contract formulas?

WIC Programs are required to have competitively bid infant formula rebate contracts with infant formula manufacturers. WIC State agencies agree to provide one brand of infant formula and in return the manufacturer provides a rebate for each can of infant formula purchased by WIC participants. By negotiating rebates with formula manufacturers, States are able to serve more people.

3. What is the fiscal impact of WIC's formula rebate?

In federal fiscal year 2010 the national rebate savings were \$1.7 billion, supporting an average of 1.9 million participants each month, or 20.5 percent of the estimated average monthly caseload. From January 2011 – March 2012, Arkansas WIC served an average of 92,983 participants per month. The funds realized through rebates provided food for 30,024 women, infants and children a month or 32.28% of those receiving WIC during that period.

4. When will my patients have to change formula?

October 1, 2012. WIC participants will continue to receive their current formula through September 30, 2012. Beginning October 1, 2012 all participants will be issued one of the formulas outlined in this letter. If your patient is currently receiving a special formula that will be discontinued, they will need a new prescription for an approved product before they will be able to receive October food checks.

5. If I write a prescription for a product not on the list, will it be approved?

No. Only the formulas listed in this letter will be approved and issued to WIC participants. Physicians may choose to initiate a prior authorization through Medicaid for certain products not approved by WIC.

6. Which of the new contract products is most like the product my patient is currently receiving?

Current Formula	New Formula
Enfamil Premium Infant	Gerber Good Start Gentle OR Good Start Protect
Enfamil Gentlease	Gerber Good Start Soothe
Enfamil A.R.	Gerber Good Start Gentle
Enfamil ProSobee	Gerber Good Start Soy

7. Why is my patient’s special formula not being provided anymore?

Cost containment measures have been taken in order to continue to serve all eligible WIC participants. Special formulas were reviewed and selected based on availability, request, nutritional comparability and costs.

8. What kind of support is available for my breastfeeding patients?

WIC recognizes breastfeeding as the norm for infant nutrition. Breastfeeding support and education is given to all women enrolled in the WIC Program.

- *Each local health unit has a designated breastfeeding resource person available to answer questions and assist moms if breastfeeding issues arise.*
- *Breastfeeding Peer Counselors are located throughout the state to offer one-on-one assistance.*
- *The Arkansas WIC Breastfeeding Helpline, staffed by an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant and a Registered Dietitian that specializes in breastfeeding, is available **Monday thru Friday, 8:00 am till 4:30 pm.***

9. Who do I contact if I need more information or have questions?

For questions concerning product comparability, please contact Cristy Sellers at cristy.sellers@arkansas.gov or 501-661-2478.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the WIC Program, please contact Susan Handford at susan.handford@arkansas.gov or 501-661-2508.