

# Are You Interested in Montana's WIC Program?



**Check out the answers to these Frequently Asked Questions. WIC may be just right for you!**

**Join us for a fun and helpful program that is easy to join a great help to families.**

**Who can apply for WIC?** Pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding, and woman whose pregnancies ended early, infants and children under 5 years old, who meet the income guidelines may apply for services.

**What if I am a grandparent caring for a child under the age of five?** Many grandparents are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren, and are encouraged to apply for WIC services for the children.

**Are foster children or those cared for by relatives or in "kinship placement" eligible for WIC services?** Yes. Just bring in the letter stating that guardianship has temporarily or permanently been transferred.

**Can fathers apply for WIC for their children?** Absolutely, we encourage dads to enroll in WIC for their children. Fathers often keep routine WIC appointments for their family.

**What if I do not reside in the same County as the WIC Agency I wish to attend?** Not a problem, WIC is a nationwide program. Services are provided in every Montana county and Indian reservation. You do not have to attend the WIC agency in your County. You can easily transfer to another town or state and still maintain eligibility for WIC for your entire certification period.

**Am I eligible if I was pregnant but am no longer?** Yes. WIC services are offered to women up to 6 months after a pregnancy has ended, for any reason.

**Am I eligible if I'm not a US Citizen?** Yes. WIC is a public health program, not public assistance, even though WIC provides nutritious foods, along with other services. There is a perception that participating in WIC could affect immigration status or hurt a non-citizen's chances of becoming an American citizen, but this is not true. Non-citizens will not be deported, denied entry to the country, or denied permanent status because they applied for or receive WIC benefits.

**I hesitate enrolling in WIC because I think there must be someone else out there who needs it more than me.** Each state receives an allotment of federal funds to deliver WIC services. In Montana, over 39,000 eligible women, infants, and children **do not currently participate** in WIC. The money set aside for Montana goes to other states when we do not use our funds. The more families who participate, the more we families we can help.

**What are all the benefits WIC provides?** WIC families eat out less often, and tend to have better nutrient intake. WIC children are typically more up-to-date on immunizations, where they can often receive vaccines at the main WIC clinic site. Mothers and children are less likely to be anemic, have more success breastfeeding, and show many other health benefits the longer they participate. For every dollar spent on WIC services, there is a savings of almost \$4.00 in later health care costs. Our expert nutrition staff is eager to work with you and your family based

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on your specific nutritional needs. Public health nurses, social workers, support specialist, and breastfeeding experts round out our team.

**I am so busy, how do I know if enrolling in WIC is worth my time?** Each WIC participant receives \$720 to \$1,000 for purchase of WIC approved foods each year. A breastfeeding mother with an infant and two children will receive food benefits of more than \$3,000 a year. As the Montana WIC program grows, more families and our community benefit. Typically, a family will only have four visits each year for a participant, some follow-up appointments can now be done online, and benefits can be mailed.

**Will enrolling in WIC reduce my benefits in other programs?** WIC is not public assistance, and will not interfere with SNAP or Food Bank services. Often families participate in all three programs at the same time.

**What if I only want organic foods? I am not interested in some of the other foods.** WIC offers organic fresh fruits and vegetables, and frozen vegetables. The Montana WIC program has a strong Farm Direct program where participants can use their monthly WIC fruit and vegetable benefit, and farmers' market coupons, for local and organic produce. Participants may use WIC vouchers to purchase all or some of the foods and beverages listed. You do not have to get all the foods listed, just the foods you want.

**What else does WIC offer?** WIC offers a variety of healthy food choices; nutrition information; referrals to other health and community services; growth monitoring; Farmer's Market coupons; breastfeeding support, pumps and supplies. The staff at WIC is highly qualified with advanced education in nutrition, health, and breastfeeding. You may also work with a dietitian for individual nutrition needs.

**Can I get a breast pump if I decide to breastfeed?** WIC will provide you with a breast pump, breastfeeding support, and counseling if you decide to breastfeed, your baby. Mothers who are breastfeeding and return to work or school may get an electric pump through WIC.

**How long can my children and I stay enrolled in WIC?** WIC services are for pregnant, breastfeeding, and post-partum mothers, and infants and children until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. When participants "graduate" from WIC, we make sure that they have information about other nutrition programs in their community.

**How much time does it take for appointments?** WIC appointments are provided in clinics and online. Most WIC participants have appointments four times each year and appointment types and times can vary from 15-30 minutes for each participant. Contact your local Montana WIC clinic for available times and appointments.

**My life is so busy, how can I remember one more appointment?** Most Montana WIC agencies make appointment reminder calls prior to the day of the appointment and some WIC clinics have automated calling and texting as an option.

**Does WIC protect confidentiality? I do not want people to know I am enrolled.** WIC information is confidential and WIC's privacy laws are even stricter than hospitals or medical clinics. Grocery store shopping for WIC foods should be enjoyable. At your appointment, WIC staff will help you navigate your chosen store and will thoroughly go over the WIC approved food list. We will help you feel confident using your WIC vouchers at the store.

**Is there a ton of paperwork I need to complete to participate in WIC?** The paperwork part of WIC is minimal. To enroll, participants will need to bring some documents including identification for eligible participants, proof of residence, and proof of income status. We try to make it as easy as possible to enroll in WIC. When you call or come into the office for an initial appointment, staff will discuss what can be brought.

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**What if I will be gone for the summer or need to transfer clinics?** WIC offers services in clinics across Montana and in every state. You can easily transfer to another city, state, or to a reservation clinic.