

February 4th, 2014



Dear State WIC Directors:

The addition of infant food fruits and vegetables was one of the many changes included in the revisions to the WIC food packages. The attached memorandum serves as a reminder of the various options available to State agencies to ensure infants receive the maximum monthly allowance of infant food (infant cereal, fruits, vegetables and meat) provided in WIC regulations. For State agencies that use rounding, guidance on issuing infant foods, including sample calculations and the WIC Infant Food Calculator, can be found at <http://wicworks.nal.usda.gov/food-packages/staff-training-and-education/infant-food-guidance>.

Keemle Concomon

*Office of the Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services*

Attachment



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive
Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

February 4th, 2014

SUBJECT: WIC Policy Memorandum 2014-2
Issuance of Infant Food in the WIC Food Package

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

WIC State Agency Directors
All Regions

This memorandum responds to requests from State agencies that administer the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) for clarification on the issuance options for infant foods in the WIC food packages, including the Federal WIC requirement at 7 CFR 246.10(h) that authorizes rounding up to the next whole container of infant food (infant cereal, fruits, vegetables, and meat).

BACKGROUND

The WIC food packages are designed to ensure that food benefits issued to participants are consistent with the nutritional and health goals of the Program. Federal WIC regulations at 7 CFR 246.10(c) require the maximum monthly allowances of WIC foods be provided to WIC participants in full (except to the extent the packages are tailored to the needs of individual participants for reasons such as food allergies). To ensure that infants receive the full nutritional benefit of infant foods, Federal WIC regulations at 7 CFR 246.10(h) authorize rounding up to the next whole container of infant food (infant cereal, fruits, vegetables and meat). Rounding ensures that infants receive the full nutritional benefit of infant foods when the maximum monthly allowance cannot be issued due to varying container sizes of authorized infant foods.

INFANT FOOD ISSUANCE OPTIONS

State agencies may choose to authorize a variety of container sizes of infant foods including: 1) those that divide evenly into the maximum monthly allowances (e.g., 4 ounce); 2) combinations of package sizes that provide the maximum (e.g., 4 ounce and 3.5 ounces); and 3) those package sizes that require the use of the rounding methodology (e.g., 3.5 ounce).

The following examples illustrate the different infant food issuance options that a State agency may choose to authorize.

Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

Although the examples provided are specific to the infant feeding category of the partially breastfed infant for infant fruits and vegetables, the same issuance options apply to the other infant feeding categories (i.e., fully breastfed and fully formula fed) and other infant foods authorized (i.e., cereals, meats).

Container size that divides evenly into the maximum

If the State agency authorizes the 4 ounce container size of infant food fruits and vegetables, the participant may receive 32 4-ounce containers of infant food fruit and vegetables per month.

Combination of container sizes (no rounding required)

If the State agency authorizes both the 4 ounce container and the twin-pack of 3.5 ounce containers, then the participant may receive a combination of these container sizes to reach their full food package benefit (e.g., 18 4-ounce containers and 8 twin-packs of 3.5 ounce containers). Food cards and/or education materials should demonstrate to the parent and/or caretaker of the participant how to obtain the full food package benefit when combination package sizes that provide the maximum are authorized.

Rounding methodology

State agencies that use the rounding up option must issue infant foods in whole containers of the same size based on the methodology specified at section 246.10(h)(2) of Federal WIC regulations. Infant food containers must be dispersed as evenly as possible over the food package timeframe (the number of months the participant will receive the food package).

If the State agency authorizes containers that do not divide evenly into the maximum, (e.g., the twin-pack of 3.5 ounce containers), then the State must use the rounding methodology in order to provide the full nutritional benefit. The number of containers the participant would receive each month over a 6-month period is 18, 18, 18, 18, 19, 19. The State agency must ensure that the participant is aware that there is a variance in the amount they are authorized to receive each month over the 6-month period when rounding is used.

Fresh banana substitution

States are reminded they may replace up to 16 ounces of infant food fruit at a rate of 1 pound of bananas per 8 ounces of infant food fruit. If a State agency chooses to authorize fresh bananas at the substitution rate, they must adjust their infant food issuance amounts for all issuance options authorized, as appropriate.

SUMMARY

When assessing products for their approved food lists, State agencies should consider factors such as cost, product distribution within a State, and WIC participant acceptance.

Additionally, State agencies are reminded of the issuance options for infant foods, including the authority to round up infant foods, in formulating an approved WIC food list. In order to prevent confusion, WIC State agencies should specify on the food instrument and/or the food card, the number of containers that a participant may purchase.

Additional guidance on issuing infant foods, including sample calculations and the WIC Infant Food Calculator, can be found at <http://wicworks.nal.usda.gov/food-packages/staff-training-and-education/infant-foods-guidance>. Please contact your respective Regional Office with any questions about the correct issuance of infant foods in the WIC food package.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra R. Whitford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DEBRA R. WHITFORD
Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division