

Illinois WIC Program

For over 30 years, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has been helping Illinois mothers, babies, and children get the foods they need for proper growth and development. WIC may be able to help if you:

- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have an infant or children up to age five
- Are working with limited income or have no income
- Want to improve your family's health with good nutrition

What is WIC? The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), authorized by Congress in 1972 and operational in 1974, is a federal health, nutrition, and prevention program with a successful record of improving the diet and safeguarding the health of infants and children under age five, and pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women who are at risk for nutrition-related illness. WIC is administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These benefits are available in all 102 Illinois counties at more than 220 clinics, which include county health departments, community action agencies, and hospitals.

In Illinois, approximately 40 percent of all babies born are on the WIC program. Studies show the tremendous impact the WIC program has had on improving the health status of at-risk, low-income pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and infants and young children. WIC is the entry point or "gateway" program for this population into the health care system. Recent studies have shown that WIC reduces fetal deaths, infant mortality, low birth weight rates, and iron deficiency anemia in children and increases immunization rates.

What does WIC provide? WIC provides nutrition education, counseling and support, breastfeeding support, nutritious foods, health screenings, and referral to other services. Even if you or your family members are working, it can be hard making ends meet. The Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) may be able to help with the right food and advice on nutrition, health care, and immunizations. WIC enables parents to feed their children properly during critical periods of growth and development. The combination of nutrition education, nutritious foods, and access to other health services strengthens families long after their WIC eligibility has ended.

Eligibility Requirements (ALL three factors must be met)

1. Category—you must be:

- A pregnant woman;
- Breastfeeding (up to one year after giving birth);
- A new mother (up to six months after giving birth); or
- A parent, guardian, or caretaker who has an *infant or child younger than five years of age*.

2. Income Guidelines

Your annual household income must be within WIC Income Guidelines. You may have a job and still meet these guidelines. (See income guidelines below.)

3. Medical or Health Risk

A screening by a WIC Certifying Health Professional must find that you have a medical or nutritional health risk such as low iron, low weight gain during pregnancy, or a diet that needs improvement.

WIC does not require proof of citizenship or alien status.