



Nutrition for Family Living

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February, 2009 Topics

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WIC participant's comments on changes in the new food package

By Gayle Coleman

Beginning in 2009, the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) food packages will offer foods that better reflect the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and WIC participants' cultural diversity. These changes were described in more detail in a January 2008 NFL, <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/specialist/nfl/mm2008.cfm>. In general, food packages for infants and breastfeeding women are designed to encourage and support breastfeeding. Some infant food packages will include infant meats, fruits and vegetables. Packages for women and children will include whole grain foods, vouchers for fruits and vegetables, and canned beans in place of dry beans or peanut butter. Packages for breastfeeding women may include canned fish. For women and children over 2 years of age, WIC vouchers will stipulate low-fat or fat-free milk and reduced-fat cheese. The quantities of foods in the new food packages may be different than they were in the old food packages to keep changes cost neutral.

Researchers at the University of Maryland conducted a study with 223 WIC participants to examine their responses to food package changes, to identify racial/ethnic differences, and to assess costs. All of these WIC participants completed a demographic questionnaire and food frequency questionnaire. Questionnaires corresponded to one of three WIC food packages: 'mother' (pregnant, breastfeeding and post partum women), infants (6 to 11 months), and children (1 to 4 years.) Individual interviews were conducted with 187 participants and 36 women participated in focus groups.

The women were from seven WIC clinics in five ethnically and geographically diverse counties in Maryland. Thirty-nine percent of women were white, 35% were African American, 18% were Hispanic, and 12% were Asian, another race or undeclared. The women's age ranged from 18 to 64 years with a mean of 28 years. Eighty-two percent had finished high school and 32% were receiving food stamps. Approximately one quarter (29%) of these women completed the 'mother' questionnaire, 21% completed the infant questionnaire and 49% completed the child questionnaire.

The study yielded six major findings. First, almost 100% of women reported that they or their children consumed fruits (including 100% juice) and vegetables. Fresh fruits and vegetables were most popular but many also consumed frozen and canned varieties. There were no significant differences in the intake of fruits and vegetables by race/ethnicity. However, African Americans



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were the least likely to consume fresh vegetables and Hispanics were the least likely to consume frozen and canned vegetables. WIC participants were pleased that the new food package would include vouchers for fruits and vegetables.

Second, most infants in this sample consumed commercial baby foods, including fruits, vegetables, and meats. The high prevalence of commercial baby food consumption suggests that baby food fruit, vegetables, and meats are culturally acceptable and readily available in grocery stores.

Third, many of the women reported that they did not want to switch to low-fat or non-fat milk. Although the majority of mothers (67%) and children (82%) drank milk every day, only 18% of mothers and 9% of children drank low-fat or non-fat milk. Whites were less likely to drink whole milk than African Americans, and African Americans were less likely to consume low-fat or non-fat milk than whites or Hispanics.

Fourth, women preferred white bread over whole-grain bread. Approximately half of women and children consumed whole wheat bread, and many consumed brown rice, corn tortillas, and oatmeal. However, few reported consuming barley, bulgur and whole-wheat tortillas. Over half of women said they would eat more whole-wheat bread if WIC provided it, and between 55% (child questionnaire) and 64% ('mother' questionnaire) said they would eat more whole grains if WIC provided it. Some women said that they did not know if their bread was whole grain or not.

Fifth, 67% of breastfeeding women said they would eat more canned fish such as canned salmon and sardines if WIC provided it.

Sixth, the new food packages were generally cost-neutral when compared to the current food packages except when extensive substitutions such as including soy products were made. In Maryland, participants were not interested in getting soy products, suggesting that Maryland WIC would not have to deal with the extra costs of these substitutions.

Source: Black MM, Hurley KM, Oberlander SE, Hager ER, McGill AE, White NT and Quigg AM. Participants' Comments on Changes in the Revised Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children Food Packages: The Maryland Food Preference Study. *J Am Diet Assoc* 2009; 1: 116-123.

Implications for Extension Educators: Awareness of WIC participants' attitudes towards changes in the new food packages will help us as we work with WIC to plan and implement education for WIC participants. Educational materials such as WNEP displays and flip charts on whole grains and low-fat milk could be used to help WIC learners understand which foods are whole grain, why low-fat milk is recommended, and practical suggestions for switching to low-fat and non-fat milk.



Beverage Issues

By Susan Nitzke

A team of researchers at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health reports that consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages has been increasing in the past decade or so, that sugar-sweetened beverages are the largest source of beverage calories, that the average intake of sugar-sweetened beverages is 28 ounces providing 203 calories per day, and that consumption of these beverages is highest among subgroups that are at high risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. When they compared adults' dietary intake data from two National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, they found that 58% of adults consumed sugar-sweetened beverages on the survey day in 1988-94 and 63% consumed sugar-sweetened beverages on the survey day in 1999-2004. Young adults consumed more of these beverages than older adults. Within the 20-44 year-old age group, the following percentages reported having one or more sugar-sweetened beverages on the day of the 1999-2004 surveys:

- All 20-44 year olds -- 68%
- Women -- 64%
- Men -- 74%
- Non-Hispanic whites -- 67%
- Non-Hispanic blacks -- 78%
- Mexican Americans -- 76%

For this same age group, the caloric contribution of these beverages was highest for low-income individuals, obese persons, and individuals with less education. More young adults drank sugar-sweetened beverages on the survey day (68%) than drank diet soda, juice, milk, coffee/tea, or alcohol (17, 16, 52, 50 and 27%, respectively).

A fact sheet on sweetened beverages from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention summarizes research on sweetened beverages and makes the following suggestions for people who wish to reduce their caloric intake from beverages:

- When thirsty, think water first instead of caloric beverages.
- When eating out, order water with meals instead of caloric beverages—water is usually free.
- When eating at home, serve water or low-calorie beverages with meals.
- Don't "stock the fridge" with sugar-sweetened beverages. Instead, keep a jug or bottles of cold water in the refrigerator.
- For a quick, easy, and inexpensive thirst-quencher, carry a water bottle and refill it throughout the day instead of drinking sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Make water more exciting by drinking carbonated water or adding slices of lemon, lime, watermelon, or cucumber, which add flavor with few calories.
- Add a splash of 100% juice to plain sparkling water for a refreshing, low-calorie drink.



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- Choose “diet” beverages sweetened with artificial (non-nutritive) sweeteners instead of sugar-sweetened drinks.

Implications for Extension Educators: Substituting low-fat/non-fat milk or water for sugar-sweetened beverages is a simple, low-cost strategy that can improve the quality of many American’s diets, especially for low-income individuals and families served by WNEP. Educational programs that help learners plan practical ways to work toward this behavioral goal could make an important contribution to overall diet quality.

References:

Bleich S, Wang YC, Wang Y, Gortmaker SL. Increasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages among US adults: 1988-94 to 1999-2004. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2009;89:372-81.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2006. Research to practice Series, number 3. Does drinking beverages with added sugars increase the risk of overweight? Available online: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/pdf/r2p_sweetend_beverages.pdf

Educational Resources:

“What’s in your drink?” display about reading labels to choose beverages. Available from WNEP data base and WI Nutrition Education Network website: <http://www.nutrisci.wisc.edu/nutrinet/ndrink.html>.



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NOTE TO EDUCATORS: There is a FLP press release for February 2009 that fits with this NFL article. The press release is a part of a series of news releases produced by a workgroup of the Eating Well and Being Active team.

National School Breakfast Week In March Kicks Off Celebration for Good Nutrition.

By Julia Salomon

March will offer ample opportunities to educate about and celebrate good nutrition and healthy eating habits including the consumption of breakfast as a good eating practice.

March provides an opportunity to celebrate nutrition. It starts with National School Breakfast Week, from the 2nd to the 6th, and the focus on nutrition continues for the rest of National Nutrition Month[®].

National School Breakfast Week or NSBW is an annual celebration dedicated to promoting the School Breakfast program and its contribution to the health and well being of school children. First launched in 1989, it was created by the School Nutrition Association, to raise awareness of the availability of school breakfast programs for all children and is celebrated every year during the first week of March. This year's theme, Power Up with School Breakfast, emphasizes the significance and benefits of eating a healthy breakfast, a variety of foods and being active.

Talking about the benefits of breakfast is a great way to kick off a month dedicated to promoting good eating habits. Many school age children do not start their day with a healthy breakfast, due to lack of time, appetite or resources. School breakfast programs are one way to ensure that all students, regardless of socio economic status, are one step closer to having what they need to succeed in school. Schools across the state are able to highlight the important contributions of the School Breakfast Program to school children, their parents, school staff and their communities.

Research has shown that eating breakfast can improve academic performance, boost test scores, reduce absenteeism and tardiness in school, improve mood and behavior and decrease classroom disruptions.

National Nutrition Month[®] is a nutrition education and information campaign created by the American Dietetic Association and celebrated annually in March. The campaign for this year focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. Eating breakfast is a healthy strategy that fits in the "Eat Right" theme for the 2009 National Nutrition Month[®].

Some of the key messages for the "Eat Right" National Nutrition Month[®] campaign are:

- Eating right and staying fit are important no matter what your age. Help yourself to feel your best by making healthy food choices and being physically active every day.
- Eating right does not have to be complicated. Start with the recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid.
- Make your calories count. Think about nutrient-rich foods as opposed to "good" or "bad" foods.
- Focus on Variety. Eat a variety of food from all the food groups to get the nutrients your body needs.



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- Know your fats. Look for foods that are low in saturated, trans fats and cholesterol. Focus on mono or poly-unsaturated fats.
- Physical Activity for fitness and healthy. Balance physical activity with a healthful diet for better health.
- Older adults have special needs. Calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B12, fiber and potassium are important nutrients for older adults.
- Healthy eating habits for kids. Parents can help children improve their eating habits by making healthy changes a part of their daily routine.

For more information about National School Breakfast Week, please visit

<http://docs.schoolnutrition.org/meetingsandevents/nsbw2009/index.html>

<http://www.schoolbreakfast.org/>

For more information on National Nutrition Month[®] please visit:

http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/NNM_2007_home.htm

Implication for Extension Educators: The Eat Right theme and key messages of this year's National Nutrition Month[®] campaign are consistent with goals of the Eating Well and Being Active Team and WNEP. Before March arrives, you might want to contact registered dietitians and other agencies that promote this campaign in your area, to coordinate and plan your nutrition education programs and activities for National Nutrition Month[®]. Contact local schools and consider planning some breakfast related nutrition activities during National School Breakfast Week. Educating audiences about the positive outcomes related to breakfast consumption, in the context of good nutrition, is consistent with teaching and promoting healthy eating patterns.
