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New WIC Foods Promote Healthy Habits

Starting on Oct. 1, North Carolina will make major changes to WIC, the federally funded special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children. There will be more choices to support healthy habits such as breastfeeding, and eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Pregnant, breastfeeding or postpartum women, infants, or children under five years of age who have a medical or nutritional problem and meet the income guidelines are eligible for this program.

Whole-grain breads and cereals, tortillas, brown rice, fruits, vegetables and tofu are just some of the new items that will be available to WIC participants. The changes will also encourage more breastfeeding. For example, mothers who breastfeed their children will receive more of the healthy foods than mothers who do not.

As concerns about growing rates of overweight, obesity and diabetes continue, health experts say an overhaul of the WIC Program was needed.

"Originally, the WIC foods were meant to eliminate vitamin deficiencies. Today, it's more a problem of eating too much and not getting enough physical activity that we have to deal with," explains Kathleen Tucker, R.D., director of the WIC Program for Cabarrus County, a department of the Cabarrus Health Alliance. "The new foods follow the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*."

In general, the foods available to the 5,200 WIC participants in Cabarrus County will be higher in fiber and lower in fat. For the first time, selections like tofu, brown rice, tortillas and a wider variety of beans will meet more cultural preferences. At the WIC Office, families receive food instruments and cash-value vouchers along with healthy recipes and tips on how to buy and use the healthier foods items. WIC participants have also been taste-testing samples of the new food items during their recent visits to the Cabarrus County WIC Office.

"The WIC Program is especially helpful to families in this economy," states Mrs. Tucker. "Parents want to give their children healthier choices like more fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. Now they can." The North Carolina WIC Program supports healthy habits for healthy families.

For more information, contact the WIC Program at the Cabarrus Health Alliance at 704-920-1204 or visit www.cabarrushealth.org.

WIC Healthy Habits, Healthy Families

- ♦ Breastfeed your baby
- ♦ Eat more fiber
- ♦ Lower the fat
- ♦ Eat more fruits and vegetables
- ♦ Eat more whole grains
- ♦ Drink less juice and sweetened beverages
- ♦ Make family meals matter