Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program Provides Healthier Food Packages for WIC Families
(By Margie Surface, RN, Public Health Program Coord.)

Michigan’s WIC Program has been offering new healthy food choices for participants since August 1, 2009. For over 30 years WIC has been successfully delivering services to promote health to the most vulnerable of our nation’s lower-income individuals and is considered one of the most successful federal health programs. Since 1974, WIC has combated childhood hunger, low birth weight, under-nutrition, and iron deficiency anemia so that WIC participants have had better health outcomes. However, new dietary recommendations to eat less fat, more fiber, fewer overall calories, fewer sweetened beverages and more vegetables and fruits as well as changes in the factors affecting the health of women, infants and children prompted a review of the foods provided by WIC. The new foods provided by the Michigan WIC Program follow changes issued by the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service. It largely reflects recommendations made by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies in the final report of its analysis of the WIC food packages, WIC Food Packages: Time for A Change, as well the latest nutrition science and the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The new food choices also encourage breastfeeding and support infant feeding practices recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

With the introduction of the new food packages WIC has a unique opportunity to promote healthier eating habits. Because the new food packages reflect current nutrition practice, we can reinforce the message that WIC is a special supplemental nutrition program.

How the new food packages promote healthier eating habits:

- **Align with Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 which promotes eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and fat reduced milk and milk products.**
  Fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain bread/tortillas were added as new food groups to the food packages. Baby foods-fruits, vegetables and meats were added as a new food group for infants. More whole grain cereals were also added as options. Juice is reduced for women and children, and eliminated for infants to provide whole fruits in the food packages instead.

- **Provide less saturated fat, cholesterol, total fat, and sodium.** Eggs, cheese, and milk were reduced in all of the food packages to limit fat and cholesterol intake. Whole milk is limited to one year old children, unless medically indicated for children and women.

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The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department (DIDHD) is pleased to announce the expansion of our adult vaccine program for those adults who are un-insured or under-insured. Through the American Recovery and Re-Investment Act (ARRA) the State of Michigan is able to offer Local Health Departments 4 vaccines for these adults who also meet the criteria listed below. The goal of this funding is to increase vaccine coverage in adults over 18 years old whose insurance does not cover these vaccines and who cannot afford to purchase it.

- Zoster (Shingles) – 60-64 years of age; 65 years and older, if not enrolled on Medicare Part D
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) – women and men 19-26 years of age
- Varicella (Chickenpox) – born in or after 1980 with no prior documentation of vaccination or evidence of immunity.
- Pneumococcal Polysaccharide (PPSV23) – high risk conditions per ACIP (includes smoking)

In addition, the DIDHD continues to provide the following vaccines through the Michigan Vaccine Replacement Program (MI-VRP) to un-insured or under-insured adults.

- Tetanus/Diphtheria (Td) – 10 year booster
- Tetanus/Diphtheria/Acellular Pertussis – Persons with close contact to an infant younger than 12 months or healthcare worker with direct patient care.
- Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) – born after 1/1/57 and persons at high risk.
- Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B – persons in high risk group.

All of these vaccines are free. However, an administration fee of $13 will be charged for each vaccine. For an appointment or more information about the eligibility criteria, please call the Health Department at (906) 774-1868 or (906) 265-9913.

Parenting Awareness

Parenting Awareness Michigan is a year-round statewide campaign to promote awareness, education, and resources - through state outreach and local efforts - emphasizing the importance of effective parenting in nurturing children to become healthy, caring and contributing citizens. Parenting Awareness Month is celebrated in March of each year.

Many communities have formed Parenting Awareness Month coalitions in an effort to bring diverse people and resources together, for a focused and systematic approach to increasing parenting education and involvement in the community.

Parenting Awareness packets, posters, matching bookmarks and technical assistance are provided at no charge to involve communities in the campaign. Information, assistance and opportunities to get connected with local efforts are provided through Prevention Network at 1-800-968-4968. Additional Parenting Awareness Materials can be ordered at no charge through the Michigan Resource Center at 1-800-626-4636.

Food Safety: Don’t Cross Contaminate

When it comes to safe food handling, everything that comes in contact with food including other food and food contact surfaces must be kept clean at all times. Food that is mishandled can lead to foodborne illness.

Ready-to-eat food is food that is edible without washing, cooking, or additional preparation by the consumer and that is reasonably expected to be consumed in that format. Cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria from raw animal foods to ready-to-eat foods. If they are not handled properly, cutting boards, utensils, and other food contact surfaces could be big sources of cross-contamination. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood. It is important to keep their juices away from all ready-to-eat foods. By following these simple steps when shopping at the grocery store all the way to storing your leftovers, you can prevent cross-contamination and reduce the risk of foodborne illness:

**Step 1**: When shopping and packaging, separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods. Place these foods in separate plastic bags to prevent any juices from contaminating other foods.

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• **Provide more choices for clients with diverse cultures.** Clients can use cash value to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables of their choice. Canned beans were added as an option for dry beans and tortillas for bread.

• **Follows current infant feeding practices.** Baby food-fruits, vegetables, and meats are not available until infants turn 6 months old which follows the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. The formula for infants is reduced at 6 months to allow for baby foods.

• **Exclusively breastfed infants and their mothers are promoted and supported with the largest packages.** Exclusively breastfed infants receive baby food meats (others do not) and twice as much baby food fruits and vegetables as other infants. Exclusively breastfeeding mothers receive the largest quantity of food. These new food packages reinforce nutrition messages; eat more fruits and vegetables, lower saturated fat and cholesterol intake, increase whole grains and fiber, drink less juice and sweetened beverages and babies are meant to breastfeed.

WIC offers families personalized nutrition and breastfeeding consultations, the Michigan WIC Bridge card for free, healthy food package purchases, tips for eating well to improve health, as well as referrals for medical and dental care, health insurance, child care and other services that can benefit the whole family. For more information about the WIC program call 906-779-7212 or 906-265-4173.

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**Step 2:** When refrigerating foods, place the raw animal foods in separate containers or sealed plastic bags to prevent their juices from dripping onto other foods. Store eggs in their original carton and refrigerate as soon as possible. Store all of these raw animal foods on the bottom shelf in the fridge.

**Step 3:** When preparing foods, **wash your hands** and food contact surfaces often. Harmful bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and contaminate cutting boards, utensils, and counter tops. To prevent this, you should wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food, after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets. Use hot, soapy water and clean cloths to wipe up kitchen surfaces or spills. Wash cutting boards, dishes, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before you move onto prepping the next food item. A solution of 50ppm unscented, liquid chlorine bleach may be used to sanitize surfaces and utensils and minimize bacteria growth. This is the equivalent of one tablespoon chlorine bleach per gallon of water.

**Step 4:** To assure clean cutting boards, if possible, use one cutting board for ready-to-eat foods such as lettuce and another cutting board for your raw animal foods. Once your cutting board becomes excessively worn or has developed hard to clean grooves, it needs to be replaced. These grooves cannot be properly cleaned and sanitized and may harbor harmful bacteria.

**Step 5:** When marinating food make sure you keep it at proper refrigeration temperature and **not room temperature**. Marinade that was used to marinate raw animal foods should not be re-used on ready-to-eat foods.

**Step 6:** When serving any ready-to-eat foods, always use a clean plate and never place cooked food on the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw animal foods.

**Step 7:** When taking care of leftovers refrigerate or freeze foods within 2 hours or sooner in clean, shallow, and covered containers to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria.

If you have any questions on food safety or properly handling foods, please call the health department at 779-7239. We’d be happy to assist you!
Since 1995, when the first full week of April was declared as National Public Health Week (NPHW), communities across the country have celebrated NPHW to recognize the contributions of public health and highlight issues that are important to improving the public’s health.

If every one of us commits to promoting good health in our communities, we can create a ripple effect from coast to coast. Through just one neighborhood that makes its public parks accessible, one municipality that launches a bike-helmet safety program, one group of people who join together to bring fresh foods to school, or one health center that offers a vaccination program, we can create a collage of public health successes across the country.

Block by block, let’s find these small changes and make them today in our communities. The only way to become a healthier nation is to create healthier communities. Join APHA during National Public Health Week 2010 as we work together to create “A Healthier America: One Community at a Time.”

Please visit http://www.nphw.org to learn more about National Public Health Week and to access resources and materials available to organizations.