

# NETA Quarterly News

Nutrition, Physical Activity & Gardening for Early Childhood Providers



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## Fruits and Vegetables in WIC Food Packages?

October 2009 is an important time for California WIC (Women, Infants and Children). Women and children enrolled in the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Program can eat a diet that meets the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid recommendations.

The new and improved WIC food packages allow the addition of fruits and vegetables. The new foods contain more fiber, less fat, and less saturated fat than the old WIC foods. They offer a wider variety of foods, to help with picky eaters. The new WIC foods also take into account different cultural food preferences among families.

The new WIC food packages provide monthly cash vouchers to help families eat more fruits and vegetables. Children receive \$6 in vouchers, specifically for fruits and vegetables. Women receive \$8, and women who exclusively breastfeed get \$10. The

vouchers can be used to pay for any variety and brand of fresh whole, or cut fruits and vegetables (except white potatoes). Families can also get fruits or vegetables that are frozen or canned without added sugars, fats, or oils. In 2010, California WIC plans to do a pilot program that will allow participants to use the fruit and vegetable vouchers at local farmers markets. Until then, the vouchers can only be redeemed at authorized grocery stores.

Another important change in the new WIC food packages is the reduction of the amount of juice allowance for children, from 256 fluid ounces to a total of 128 ounces of 100% vitamin C-rich juice per month. High consumption of juice may increase a child's caloric intake and may lead to overweight. Other improvements include the addition of healthful whole grains and cereals and the change from whole milk to low-fat milk (for 2-5 year olds). Dairy substitutes, such as soy beverages and tofu, have also been added.

The improvements in the WIC food packages can help children form better eating habits and have healthful weights early in life.



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## References:

California WIC Association: New WIC Foods for Children <http://www.calwic.org/newfood.aspx>

WIC Food Packages...Time for a Change: Frequently Asked Questions [http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning\\_Center/FP/FAQ.pdf](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Learning_Center/FP/FAQ.pdf)

WIC Authorized Food List Shopping Guide October 2009 <http://ww2.cdpb.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Documents/WIC-AuthorizedFoods-WICAutorizedFoodListShoppingGuide.pdf>



University of California Cooperative Extension in Alameda County  
1131 Harbor Bay Pkwy, Ste. 131  
Alameda, CA 94502  
Ph: 510-567-6812 ■ Fax: 510-748-9644

## Health Benefits of the New WIC Food Packages

In California the WIC program serves approximately 1.4 million pregnant women, mothers, and children. Recipients of the WIC program are families who have limited financial resources and often reside in communities where access to fresh produce is limited. Many of these families are African American, Latino, or Southeast Asian. Without WIC assistance many of these families cannot purchase a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, tofu, and more healthful amounts of cheese, juice and eggs.



Effective October 2009, the food packages for WIC will undergo their first major makeover in more than 30 years. This change reflects

advances in nutrition knowledge, updates on recommended intakes, expanded food supply, growth and diversity in the population, and the emergence of obesity as a major public health problem.

The WIC packages will allow the purchase of a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Eating more vegetables and fruits is a major recommendation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 and is associated with reduced risk of chronic diseases. Increased vegetable and fruit intake promotes and sustains a healthful weight; replaces less nutritious items in the overall diet; and provides identified priority

nutrients—potassium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and folate. Vegetables and fruits are also good sources of fiber.

Another health benefit of the new food packages comes from including more whole grain foods. Adding more whole grains is connected with reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes (Type 2), and some cancers. Whole grains also help with weight control and increase dietary fiber.

Keeping up with the major recommendations to reduce and prevent obesity, WIC has lowered saturated fat and cholesterol in the new packages. There are less cheese and eggs; for women and children 2 years and older, milk must be fat-reduced. High intake of saturated fats and cholesterol may increase the risk of heart disease.



The changes in the WIC packages are steps in the right direction to help combat the epidemic of childhood obesity and chronic diseases. It is a public health approach with far reaching results to promote healthful eating options.

### References:

- Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005: <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/default.htm>
- WIC Food Packages: Time for a Change, December 2005: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/WIC/FILES/Time4AChange\(execsum\).pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/WIC/FILES/Time4AChange(execsum).pdf)
- California WIC Association. WIC Facts & Figures: <http://www.calwic.org/facts.aspx>
- Frank, G.C. Changes in Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Food Packages: An Opportunity to Address Obesity, Obesity Management, p. 333-337, December 2008



## Food Feature: Vegetables, Fruits, and Whole Grains

The new WIC food packages makes it easier for families to learn new ways of preparing and eating more of these foods. Families have the option to use vegetables and fruits, raw or cooked, fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.

Whole grain products, such as whole wheat, whole oats, and whole-grain corn, can be purchased. It is important to read the food labels. Look on the ingredient list for the words "whole wheat" or "whole grain" to be listed as the first or second ingredient. A hint is if the label or food package says "100% whole grain" or "excellent source of whole grain."

### Produce Tips for Cantaloupe

- Choose cantaloupes with a sweet, fragrant smell, without being too strong (it could be over-ripe).
- Look for well-rounded cantaloupes.
- Melons should be firm, but not rock hard. They should give slightly to gentle pressure near the stem end.
- Select melons that feel heavy for their size.
- Avoid melons that are dark green or with shriveled or cracked rinds. If it has any super soft spots, it is over-ripe.



## APPLE TURKEY GYRO

Make these gyros with whole wheat tortillas that are part of the new WIC food packages. Using whole wheat will boost fiber, as well as vitamins and minerals. This recipe uses vegetables and fruit that are also part of WIC packages.

Makes 6 servings. 1 gyro per serving  
Prep time: 10 minutes. Cook time: 15 minutes



## CURRIED CANTALOPE SLAW

Makes 8 servings.  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups per serving.  
Prep time: 15 minutes

Buy a firm cantaloupe to more easily grate or slice the melon for the slaw. Make the slaw no more than 30 minutes before serving to prevent the melon from becoming soft.

### Ingredients

- 1 firm cantaloupe
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plain low-fat yogurt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon grated ginger
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon curry powder, or to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, or to taste
- Zest and juice of 1 lime, more to taste
- 4 teaspoons thinly sliced mint

### Preparation

1. Peel and seed the cantaloupe, then cut it into large pieces about 3 inches in length. Grate or thinly slice the cantaloupe pieces, then place the cantaloupe in a large

### Ingredients

- 1 cup sliced onion
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 cups sliced red bell pepper
- 2 cups sliced green pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  pound turkey breast, cut into thin strips
- 1 medium apple, cored and sliced
- 6 whole wheat pitas or whole wheat tortillas, lightly toasted
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup lowfat yogurt (optional)

### Preparation

1. In a nonstick skillet, sauté onion, lemon juice, and bell peppers in oil until crisp-tender.
2. Stir in turkey and cook until turkey is fully cooked. Remove from heat and stir in apple.



3. Fold pita or tortilla in half and fill with apple mixture; drizzle with yogurt. Serve warm.

### Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 215, Carbohydrate 33 g, Dietary Fiber 5 g, Protein 14 g, Total Fat 4 g, Saturated Fat 1 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 25 mg, Sodium 259 mg

### Adapted from:

Champions for Change, *Network of a Healthy California*, <http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/en/docs/Lunch/Apple-Turkey-Gyro.pdf>



### Nutrition information per serving:

30 calories;  
1 gram protein;  
7 grams carbohydrates; 1 gram fiber; 0 fat;  
1 mg. cholesterol; 167 mg. sodium.



### Adapted from:

*Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 2009

### References for Produce Tips:

Produce Quick Tips, Network for a Healthy California <http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/en/docs/produce-quick-tips/Cantaloupe.pdf>

Harvest of the Month, Network for a Healthy California [http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/download/Summer/Melons/mel\\_fam\\_2.pdf](http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/download/Summer/Melons/mel_fam_2.pdf)

Pick a Better Snack—Cantaloupe. Iowa State University Extension <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/food/snackideas/cantaloupe1.pdf>



# Early Childhood Age-Appropriate Physical Activity

**C**hildren in early childhood need at least 30 minutes of formal, structured physical activity and 30 minutes of informal or recreational activity daily. For Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) working in the classroom this requirement may pose a challenge at the beginning.

There are several resources available a teacher may use to plan activities throughout the day. Using your expertise on child development and the Department of Education's Desired Results, identify the movement skills that are essential for a preschooler's gross motor development. In addition, identify the competencies and

objectives that must be accomplished. Most children ages 3-5 need to work on large muscle movements. Suggested activities include hopping, skipping, jumping forward, balancing on one foot, throwing, and catching. The next step

is to include the selected activity as part of your lesson for the day. You may need to do some adjustments in order to break the traditional classroom routine.

Each activity may require you to demonstrate the skill and direct the movements using verbal descriptions or key phrases. Briefly talk about movement experiences and the importance of

keeping yourself active. The discussion will help foster a lifelong appreciation for movement and will help children make a connection between physical activity and its benefits.

Age-appropriate physical activities will help preschoolers establish the building blocks needed for the more complex movement tasks to come.

## References:

Breslin, C.M., et al. Implementing a Physical Activity Curriculum into the School Day. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. (2008). 35:429-437.

[http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=ns\\_active.html](http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=ns_active.html)



Photo: Network for a Healthy California



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California*, with funding from the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. In California, food stamps provide assistance to low-income households, and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For food stamp information, call 877-847-3663. For important nutrition information visit [www.cachampionsforchange.net](http://www.cachampionsforchange.net).

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