

# January 2016 WIC Messenger

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Paul R. LePage, Governor

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner



## Packaging Change for Enfamil Ready to Use Formulas

Packaging for some Enfamil Ready To Use (RTU) 32 ounce formulas have recently changed. The new bottles will be available from your formula suppliers. Below are pictures of both the old cans and new bottles, along with their UPC codes. While the cans are being phased out, WIC customers with checks listing **Enfamil Infant RTU** or **Enfamil Gentlease RTU** or **Enfamil Nutramigen RTU** can purchase their formula in either bottles or cans no matter which of the two UPC codes is listed on the check.

New Bottle UPC 115602



New Bottle UPC 115626



New Bottle UPC 115640



## An Expensive Mistake: Selling Powdered Infant Formula when the Check Lists Concentrate

A mistake made by customers and cashiers that can cause a store to lose quite a bit of money on a WIC check is switching powdered infant formula for concentrated formula. Every WIC check for formula lists the number of containers, the kind of formula and the form it should be in for the baby. When "PWD" is listed on the check it means "powdered", "CONC" means "concentrate" and "RTU" means "ready to use". Customers are issued checks for infant formula in the form that works best for their child.

Cans of powdered formula mix up to much larger amounts of formula than cans of concentrate do. For this reason, powdered formula can be up to three times more expensive than concentrate. If a customer is allowed to purchase powdered formula when their check is for concentrate, it is almost certain that when you deposit that check it will be rejected by our bank for being over the maximum allowed for the check. Have your cashiers double check the number of cans, the type and form of the formula your customers are buying. Better yet, have them check the UPC digits on the cans compared to those listed on the WIC check.

## Check the Signature

The WIC folder is the customer's identification for using WIC checks. It is the only identification you can request. Always compare the signature of the WIC customer to the signatures on the WIC folder.

Many customers are new to WIC. Some may not be used to signing a check on the bottom and may sign the check on the back. If that happens, politely ask the customer to re-sign the check on the front. Our banking system will not recognize a check signed only on the back, the check will reject for missing signature and your store will not be paid.

## Watch Those Dates!

Sometimes, a WIC customer mistakenly presents a check that is no longer valid or that may not yet be valid. It is very important that the cashier confirm that the customer is using the right checks. The WIC Program will not replace a check that was used in the wrong month.

What this means for the customer is that they may not get the food they need when they need it. What it means for your store is that your store will not be paid if the check is taken too early or too late.

Always look to make sure that you are given valid checks. If the customer gives you a check that is not valid, simply ask them if they have current checks.

Remember, your store must deposit WIC checks within 30 days of the last day to use printed on the check. If a check is deposited after that time, it will reject at the bank for stale date and the WIC Program will not pay the check.

## Scanning WIC Products

If an item scans, then it's allowed, right? Not necessarily. Cashiers must verify that the item is **both a WIC-approved product (on our food list) and it is listed on the WIC check being presented**. For example, a 16 ounce jar of peanut butter may be a WIC-approved product, but if it is not listed on the customer's check, it is not allowed and that customer cannot purchase it with that check. Checks can reject because the items the customer selected were not listed on their check, even though the item was WIC-approved.

## Vendor Claims

Per state and federal regulations, when a vendor has charged the WIC Program more for food than is permitted or has made another error that has resulted in an unjustified payment to the vendor, the WIC Program will establish a claim for repayment. The WIC Program will notify and provide the information that is the basis for the claim to the vendor. If the overcharge is identified on one or more checks, the WIC Program will request payment for the full amount of each check containing the overcharge. Once notified, the vendor will have 15 days provide justification for the overcharge or to correct it. If satisfied with the justification the vendor provides, the WIC Program will send a notice of resolution to the vendor.

If the vendor cannot correct or justify the full amount of the vendor claim, the WIC Program will issue a final claim to the vendor. The vendor must pay any final claim assessed within 30 days of receipt of the final claim. In some cases, the WIC Program may allow the vendor to create an alternate plan for repayment of the claim.

Payment of a claim does not dismiss any other sanctions the Program may impose on the vendor due to the vendor overcharges. Failure to repay a claim may result in disqualification from the WIC Program and denial of an application for reauthorization.

For more detail, refer to the WIC Program VM: 14 Vendor Claims Policy online at [wicforme.com](http://wicforme.com)

## Get the Right Milk!

The WIC customer's check provides a description of the type of milk they can buy with their check.

WIC check lists:		Product allowed may be called:
1% or SKIM MILK	=	Fat free, Nonfat, Skim, Low fat, Light or 1% Milk
2% or 1 1/2% MILK	=	Reduced fat, 1.5%, 2% Milk
WHOLE MILK	=	Whole Milk

## WIC Transaction Procedures

- Ask the WIC Customer for their WIC folder and check
- Make sure the check is from the Maine WIC Nutrition Program
- Make sure the check is within the valid date range printed at the top
- Make sure that the items the customer selected are:
  - Listed on the check
  - WIC-approved
  - The right package size and
  - The amount allowed by the check
- Using blue or black ink, have the customer enter the total purchase amount on the WIC check (for Fruit and Vegetables check do not write in more than the value printed on the check)
- Ask the customer to sign the check
- Match the signature on the check to one of the signatures on the folder
- Offer the customer their receipt and return their folder.

WIC cannot pay for bottle deposits or bag fees. Please collect these from the WIC customer.

A WIC customer is not required to purchase all the food listed on their check, but they can not purchase more.

For Fruit and Vegetable checks, the maximum amount WIC will pay is typed on the check. If the customer's produce purchase is more than allowed by the check, they should enter the maximum value of the check in the amount box. They should never write in more than the value printed on the check. The customer may chose to pay the difference themselves with cash, credit, or debit. If their produce purchase is less than the amount allowed by the check, have the customer enter the total purchase price.

### DO NOT ACCEPT A WIC CHECK IF:

- Today's date is outside of the first and last dates to use identified on the check;
- The check appears to have been altered in any way;
- The check was not signed in the presence of the cashier or the signature does not match one of the signatures on their WIC folder; it's okay if it the signature doesn't match the participant name printed on the check , only the signatures need to match;
- The check is from a state other than Maine;
- The customer does not have their WIC folder.

If the MICR line on the bottom of the check is missing or has strange symbols in it, do not deposit the check and call the WIC Program.

## Changes to Beechnut Infant Foods

Beechnut Infant Foods has eliminated the word "Chiquita" from the name of its Infant Stage 2 Bananas and has changed the UPC code of the product. Both products are allowed by the WIC Program.



The WIC check identifies how many **ounces** of baby food a customer can purchase. For example, if a customer's check lists **64 ounces** of infant fruits or vegetables, they are allowed to purchase **16 jars** of these products with that check. The cashier is required to count the jars of infant fruits and vegetables that the customer has selected. You should have a sticker in your WIC folders showing the conversion from ounces to jars. If you do not have these stickers, please call us and we will provide those to you.

## The Purpose of the WIC Program

The WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Nutrition Program is a federally-funded program established to provide supplemental healthy food to eligible Maine residents during critical times of growth and development. Pregnant, postpartum, breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to the age of five are eligible for the program if they are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level and have a medical or nutritional risk. Program staff also provides WIC participants breastfeeding support and referrals to other health services.

## WIC-Customer Complaints

We would like to know about any problems or concerns you have with WIC customers or processing WIC transactions. The problem may be a misunderstanding. Some clients may be new to WIC or do not understand the Approved Foods List or transaction procedures.

However, sometimes a WIC customer, as with any customer, can be challenging. Please assist them, in a discreet manner, to resolve the conflict. You may report the WIC participant issue using the form that can be found on our website, [www.wicforme.com](http://www.wicforme.com) if: (1) you were unable to resolve the problem or question; (2) it is a WIC customer with whom you have repeated problems; (3) an incident occurs that causes concern for you or your staff.

If client issues arise, our office works with the local agency that serves the client in resolving the problem. It is important that you give us as much information as possible so that we may better assist you. Please provide us with the following information: (1) the client name and ID number; (2) the WIC check number; (3) the name of the shopper if available to you—it may be a client, a representative, a proxy or an unauthorized individual attempting to use the checks; (4) a description of the incident or problem and a description of the shopper; (5) date and time of the incident.

If you or your staff are threatened in any way, do not hesitate to call the proper authorities and notify us immediately.

## Incentive Policy

You cannot offer a WIC customer incentives that you do not offer to all your other customers. You can offer buy-one-get-one and other types of promotions to WIC customers, and you can accept valid manufacturer coupons from WIC customers if you allow these for all your customers.

Remember, you must always treat a WIC customer as you would any other customer.

## Authorized Distributor Requirement and List of WIC-Authorized Distributors

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services requires WIC Vendors to only purchase infant formula from a distributor that has been approved by the WIC Program. In Maine, the approved distributors are:

Associated Grocers of New England  
Auburn Merchandise Distributors  
BJ's Wholesalers  
Bozzuto's Inc.  
C & S Wholesale Grocers  
Capitol Candy Co. Inc. Wholesalers  
Hannaford and/or Distribution  
HD Smith Wholesale Drug Co.  
Market Basket, Inc/DeMoulas  
Mead Johnson  
Pine State Trading Co.  
Sam's Club/Distribution Center  
Save A Lot—Wells Distribution Center  
Shaw's and/or Wells Distribution Center  
Town and Country Foods  
Wal-Mart and/or Distribution Center

Purchasing infant formula from a distributor not authorized by the WIC Program can result in your store being disqualified from the WIC Program.

## Store Status Changes:

### No Longer Accepting WIC:

Smith's General Store, Springfield  
Tozier's Market, Bucksport  
Jim's Corner Grocery, Frenchville  
Orono Thriftway, Orono  
Banadir Market, Portland  
Tilton's Market, Buckfield  
Six Mile Falls Store, Bangor

### New Ownership:

Lyon's IGA, Lubec  
Ward's Neighborhood Market (formerly Bourque's Central Market)  
Tradewinds Shop 'n Save, Calais (formerly Paradis Shop 'n Save)

### New Location:

Tradewinds Market, Clinton

### New Store:

Hannaford's, No. Berwick

## Lost Revenue

A large portion of our October, 2015 newsletter dealt with ways WIC checks reject at the bank and tips on how you can reduce the number of checks that reject. The following data shows how many checks rejected in October, November and December 2015 for reasons that can be minimized or even avoided by stores. We have also included the totals lost by stores for checks not paid by WIC.

	Missing Signature (1)	Taken Early/Late/Stale Date (1)	Unreasonable Dollar Amount (2)	Missing/Unreadable Vendor Stamp (3)
Number of checks rejected October 2015	37	53	142	37
Number of stores involved October 2015	27	27	63	n/a
Total Lost by stores October 2015	\$903.99	\$1,385.52	n/a	n/a
Number of checks rejected November 2015	31	54	154	46
Number of stores involved November 2015	26	29	83	n/a
Total Lost by stores November 2015	\$713.30	\$1,510.22	n/a	n/a
Number of checks rejected December 2015	39	73	184	72
Number of stores involved December 2015	22	32	67	n/a
Total Lost by stores December 2015	\$574.60	\$1,605.12	n/a	n/a

### Comments:

1. WIC is not required to pay a check that rejects for missing signature, taken too early, too late or deposited too late (stale date).
2. Unreasonable Dollar Amount checks reject for multiple reasons and may be paid at the maximum amount allowed for the check type.
3. Missing /unreadable vendor stamp numbers are not identified on our reports. Stores can resubmit checks that are rejected for missing or unreadable vendor stamp

## Bag and Bottle Deposit Fees and Sales Tax

Some communities in Maine require fees for grocery bags and several more are considering implementing these fees.

If your store charges fees for bags, those fees must be paid by the customer—they cannot be charged to the WIC Program. Fees for bottle deposits cannot be charged to WIC and must also be paid by the WIC customer.

Sales tax can never be charged to the WIC Program.

## WIC Price Surveys Coming Soon

Why do we ask stores to submit price surveys so often? We recalculate the MARL (Maximum Allowable Redemption Level) every quarter for each category of product. What does your store gain by submitting these every quarter? Your prices and those of the stores in your peer group are used in the calculation of the average of the prices for the entire peer. If you do not submit your survey, your store's prices are not considered in the recalculation of the MARL and your store loses its "say" in what WIC will pay you for your products.

We know that price surveys are tedious and they seem to come too often. We appreciate your submitting your price surveys each quarter and on time. Remember, stores can be penalized for non-submission of price surveys.

Look for the first quarter price surveys in the next few weeks.

## Help Us Prevent Fraud

Nationally, fraud costs the WIC Program and stores millions of dollars every year. If you suspect fraud, please contact us at 1-800-437-9300 or contact us on our website at [www.wicforme.com](http://www.wicforme.com). You can also report suspected fraud for both WIC and SNAP (Food Stamps) on the website of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at <http://www.oig.dot.gov/Hotline>.

## We're Here To Help You

We're aware that there's a lot to know when handling a WIC transaction. Some errors can cost a store a lot of money. If violations of WIC rules occur during a compliance buy or investigation, your store can be penalized or even disqualified from the WIC Program! If you feel your store needs more help, call us and we'll schedule you for more training. These trainings are for any store that wishes more training. We also strongly encourage stores that have received notice of assessment of sanction points to schedule training.

We've set up a schedule of in-person trainings in Augusta for the last Thursday of each month.

Call us at least five (5) weekdays in advance to schedule your store.

### DHHS

#### Non-Discrimination Notice

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, or national origin, in admission to, access to, or operations of its programs, services, or activities, or its hiring or employment practices. This notice is provided as required by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Maine Human Rights Act and Executive Order Regarding State of Maine Contracts for Services. Questions, concerns, complaints or requests for additional information regarding the ADA may be forwarded to DHHS' ADA Compliance/EEO Coordinators, 11 State House Station – 221 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04333, 207-287-4289 (V), 207-287-3488 (V), TTY users call Maine relay 711. Individuals who need auxiliary aids for effective communication in program and services of DHHS are invited to make their needs and preferences known to the ADA Compliance/EEO Coordinators. This notice is available in alternate formats, upon request.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Questions? Need supplies? Contact Us.  
Ana Scovil, Vendor & Data Specialist  
Tina Bernier, Vendor & Data Manager

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