

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

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NEWS RELEASE

Maine Leads Nation in Making WIC Transactions at Farms Easier *Nutrition program adds phone app to expand access to local produce*

AUGUSTA — The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) today announced that Maine is the first state in the nation where participants in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program can use a phone app to get fruit and vegetables from farm stands and farmers markets throughout the state. Participants can download the mobile-to-mobile app, called Bnft, to redeem benefits for produce from farmers certified for electronic WIC (eWIC) transactions.

Maine CDC launched eWIC in 2020, transitioning from paper food vouchers to an electronic benefit transfer card that could no longer be redeemed with Maine farmers year-round. This new transaction capability and barcode scanning process returns full choice to participants on where they buy their fresh local produce, beyond the WIC Farmer's Market Nutrition Program season of July 1 through October 31, and supports local agricultural businesses and farmers. The new benefit can be accessed using a smartphone or a web portal.

"Maine WIC families now have a unique opportunity to support local farmers," said **Nirav D. Shah**, Director of the Maine CDC. "This new option makes healthy Maine-grown food more available to those who can benefit greatly from it."

The WIC program works to improve the health and nutrition of women, infants, and children during critical times of growth and development. WIC provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and supplies, and referrals to other services. Participants statewide receive WIC benefits through local WIC agencies in their communities.

The Maine WIC program serves more than 16,500 individuals. Pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 are eligible. Single fathers and foster children are also eligible. Participants must meet income guidelines, live in Maine, and be determined by a health professional to be at "nutritional risk."

WIC participants without the Bnft mobile app can access a printable barcode through the [Bnft website](#).

For more information about the benefits of WIC, how to enroll as a new participant, or to find stores that accept WIC, visit www.maine.gov/WIC.

Farmers seeking eWIC certification can visit <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/wic/farmer/index.shtml>