

# Analysis of WIC Food Package Prescriptions, 1998-2002

## I. Executive Summary

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) assists low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children by providing nutrition education, health and social service referrals, and supplemental foods. Specific WIC foods and maximum quantities are defined by Federal regulations. However, State and local WIC agencies have flexibility to tailor food package prescriptions to address participants' individual needs and preferences. The purpose of this report is to illustrate the types and amounts of foods being prescribed within the WIC Food Package for each category of participants. This report does not provide information on redemption of the food prescriptions, or on actual food consumption; at this time, comprehensive data are available only on food prescriptions.

Prescription data was collected as part of the Food and Nutrition Service's biennial WIC Participant and Program Characteristics data collection for 1998, 2000, and 2002. Results indicate that food prescriptions have remained highly stable over this time period within each participant category. Overall, a majority of eligible participants received prescriptions for the maximum amounts of infant formula, cereal, juice, legumes, and carrots while few participants received prescriptions for the maximum amounts of milk, cheese, eggs and tuna (Table ES1).

**Table ES1: Average Percent of Participants Receiving Prescriptions for the Federal Maximum Amount of WIC Foods, 1998-2002**

Food	Pregnant Women	Breastfeeding Women	Exclusively Breastfeeding Women	Postpartum, Non-Breastfeeding Women	Infants	Children
<b>Infant Formula</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	79% <sup>1</sup>	N/A
<b>Cereal</b>	94%	96% <sup>2</sup>	96% <sup>2</sup>	90%	61% <sup>3</sup>	85%
<b>Juice</b>	91%	87%	96%	96%	52% <sup>3</sup>	63%
<b>Milk</b>	1% (69% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	1% (71% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	8% (79% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	2% (58% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	N/A	1% (52% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)
<b>Cheese</b>	3% (69% prescribed 50-74.9% max.)	3% (72% prescribed 50- 74.9% max.)	1% (67% prescribed 50- 74.9% max.)	1% (62% prescribed 50- 74.9% max.)	N/A	0.3% (57% prescribed 50-74.9% max.)
<b>Eggs<sup>4</sup></b>	8% (88% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	9% <sup>2</sup> (86% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	9% <sup>2</sup> (86% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	3% (78% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)	N/A	3% (79% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)
<b>Dry Beans/Peas and/or Peanut Butter</b>	98%	90%	97%	N/A	N/A	95%

<b>Tuna</b>	N/A	N/A	32% <i>(68% prescribed ≥ 75% max.)</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Carrots</b>	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Includes only those infants receiving any formula

<sup>2</sup> Estimate based on total number of breastfeeding women (exclusively and non-exclusively breastfeeding)

<sup>3</sup> Infants 4-12 months of age

<sup>4</sup> Calculated based on maximum of 2.5 dozen eggs; States may set the actual maximum at 2 dozen