

## Food Package Nutrition Tailoring

### Policy

**USDA Federal Regulations:** 246.10(c) Nutrition tailoring. Nutrition tailoring is the process of modifying an individual food package to better meet the supplemental nutritional needs of each participant. It entails making substitutions, reductions, and/or eliminations to food types and physical food forms in accordance with [paragraphs \(e\)\(9\)](#) through [\(11\)](#) of this section to accommodate special dietary needs, cultural practices, and/or personal preference. The full maximum monthly allowances of all supplemental foods in all food packages must be made available to participants unless medically or nutritionally warranted. Reductions in these amounts cannot be made for cost-savings, administrative convenience, caseload management, or to control vendor abuse. Reductions in these amounts or eliminations of foods cannot be made for categories, groups or subgroups of WIC participants and may be done only after a nutrition assessment and offering substitution options available in the State in accordance with paragraphs (e)(9) through (11) and State agency policy. The provision of less than the maximum monthly allowances of supplemental foods to an individual WIC participant in all food packages is appropriate only when:

- (1) Medically or nutritionally warranted (e.g., to eliminate a food due to a food allergy);
- (2) A participant refuses or cannot use the maximum monthly allowances or chooses to take less than the maximum monthly allowance; or
- (3) The quantities necessary to supplement another programs' contribution to fill a medical prescription would be less than the maximum monthly allowances.

246.10(e) Food packages. There are seven food packages available under the Program that may be provided to participants. The authorized supplemental foods must be prescribed from food packages according to the category and nutritional needs of the participants. Breastfeeding assessment and the mother's plans for breastfeeding serve as the basis for determining food package issuance for all breastfeeding women. The intent of the WIC Program is that all breastfeeding women be supported to exclusively breastfeed their infants and to choose the fully breastfeeding food package without infant formula. Breastfeeding mothers whose infants receive formula from WIC are to be supported to breastfeed to the maximum extent possible with minimal supplementation with infant formula. Formula amounts issued to breastfed infants are to be tailored to meet but not exceed the infant's nutritional needs.

### Authority

- 7 CFR Part 246.10(c)(1-3)
- 7 CFR Part 246.10(e)

## Procedures

The model food packages in the data system provide the regulatory maximum quantities.

- The amount of formula for partially breastfed infants and the amount of supplemental foods for children and women with qualifying conditions must be individually tailored based on the medical documentation and the participant's needs.
- Infant formula amounts for breastfed infants, even those in the fully-formula fed category will be individually tailored to the amounts that meet their nutritional needs.  
When tailoring a food from a model food package in Focus, click on the subcategory field for the food row being tailored and select the desired subcategory from the drop down list.

Any time a subcategory within a food package is changed, along with the options below, it is considered nutrition tailoring and requires documentation on the food package panel or in the nutrition care plan. Reasons for substitution include accommodating special dietary needs, cultural practices and personal preferences.

In split custody situations it is in the best interest of everyone involved to just have one parent receive WIC on behalf of the child and then for them to share the WIC food with the other parent each month, ideally according to the time the child spends with them. If this arrangement cannot be achieved and both households have been determined to be WIC-eligible, the full nutrition benefit should be provided to each parent on behalf of the child on an every other month basis. See the Split Custody Procedure for more information.

The same full nutrition benefits apply but food types and forms in a food package may be tailored to each parents' needs/preferences in order to:

- Accommodate participant preferences and eating patterns (e.g. food allergies).
- Accommodate household and general living conditions (e.g. food storage, equipment for food preparation, unsafe water, homeless and transient status).

### Milk, Milk Alternatives and Milk Substitutions:

Food packages for women and children can be tailored with milk alternatives and substitutions up to the maximums allowed per federal regulations to accommodate the needs of an individual participant based on the Competent Professional Authority's (CPA) assessment of the participant's nutrition risk(s), dietary needs, cultural practices and personal food preferences. Medical documentation will not be required, but if substitutions are issued for cow's milk, the reason must be documented on the food package panel or in the nutrition care plan. Reasons for substitution include accommodating special dietary needs, cultural practices and personal preferences.

When individually tailoring food packages,

- Issuance of soy-based milk alternatives, goat milk, lactose-free, and acidophilus milk may be substituted for milk on a quart for quart basis up to the total MMA of milk. Kefir is a whole milk option and buttermilk would be a low-fat option.

- Tofu may be substituted for milk at the rate of 1 pound/16 oz of tofu per 1 quart of milk up to the total MMA of milk.
- Dry milk powder can be substituted for milk at the rate of one box = eight quarts, not to exceed the MMA of milk.
- Evaporated (regular or goat) can be substituted for milk at the rate of four 12 oz cans = three quarts, not to exceed the MMA of milk.
- Goat milk powder can be substituted for milk at the rate of 12 oz powder = three quarts milk, not to exceed the MMA of milk.
- One pound of cheese may be substituted for 3 quarts of milk with a maximum of one pound of cheese that can be substituted.
- One quart of yogurt may be substituted for 1 quart of milk with a maximum of 2 quarts of yogurt that may be substituted for 2 quarts of milk.

Peanut Butter/Mature Legumes Substitution: If substitutions are issued for the mature legumes and/or peanut butter food category, there must be a reason documented on the Food Package panel or in the nutrition care plan. Reasons for substitution include accommodating special dietary needs, cultural practices and personal preferences.

- Peanut butter may be substituted for nut and seed butters (on a 1:1 ounce substitution ratio) when individually tailoring food packages.

Juice/cash value voucher (CVB): If a substitution is issued for juice, there must be a reason documented on the Food Package panel or in the nutrition care plan. Reasons for substitution include accommodating special dietary needs, cultural practices and personal preferences.

- Women and children may receive either 64 ounces of juice or a \$3 CVB for the full juice amount. The monthly value of the CVB substitution amount for juice will be adjusted annually for inflation consistent with the annual inflation adjustments made to CVB values.

Eggs substitution: If a substitution is issued for eggs, there must be a reason documented on the Food Package panel or in the nutrition care plan. Reasons for substitution include accommodating special dietary needs, cultural practices and personal preferences

- Eggs may be substituted for dry legumes (1 pound), canned legumes (64 ounces), peanut butter (18 ounces) or nut and seed butters (18 ounces) when individually tailoring food packages. It may also be substituted for tofu (1 pound/16 oz) however that must be done via an account balance correction request to the WIC helpdesk. In that case you will issue the eggs as you normally would and include in your care plan your request to have them replaced with tofu per your participant's reason/request.

Due to how the data system works, participants receiving peanut butter, juice, egg and milk substitutions as well as other forms of milk (evaporated, goat, lactose-free, sweet acidophilus, and dry) must have these products specifically listed on their food benefits.

Type of Milk	Substitution Rate
Nonfat dry milk powder	1-25.6 oz box = 8 qt milk
Evaporated milk	4-12 oz cans = 3 qt milk
Goat milk powder	12 oz = 3 qt milk
Lactose free milk	1 qt = 1 qt milk
Sweet acidophilus milk	1 qt = 1 qt milk
Cheese	1 lb = 3 qt milk
Tofu	1 lb/16 oz = 1 qt milk
Soy beverage	1 qt = 1 qt milk
Yogurt	1 qt = 1 qt milk

The options for food packages that can provide both beans and peanut butter include the following:

- 1 lb dried beans + 18 oz peanut butter\*
- 64 oz canned beans + 18 oz peanut butter\*
- 2 lb dried beans
- 128 oz canned beans
- 1 lb dried beans + 64 oz canned beans
- 36 oz peanut butter\*

\*Peanut butter can be substituted with nut or seed butter.

When the quantity of food has been reduced below the full nutrition benefit, the CPA must:

- Advise the participant that the food package provides less than the regulatory maximum, and
- Offer the participant the option to obtain the full food package benefit (i.e., increase the quantity of food or provide allowable food substitutions).

If a participant receives less than the full nutrition benefit, there are two ways to document this depending on whether the reduction was due to a medical/ nutritional requirement or participant preference.

- If the participant self-reports a medical and/or nutritional reason for tailoring or making changes to a food package below the full nutrition benefit, this must be documented by marking the “Self-Reported” checkbox on the Food Package panel and documenting additional information in the “Details” text box. If the text box does not provide enough space for documentation, add the additional information in the comments box on the Food Package panel.
- If the participant declines the full food package due to participant preference, then this

reason must be documented in the comments box on the Food Package panel instead of using the “Self-Reported” checkbox.

## Best Practices

Reasons local agency staff will consider that may result in a participant refusing the full food package or not being able to use all of it include, but are not limited to the following:

- Typical food intake patterns
- Food aversions
- Household production of WIC foods
- Religious reasons prohibiting intake of WIC foods
- Refusing the form of juice (i.e., bottled vs. frozen in the model food package).

Examples of nutrition tailoring to accommodate participant preferences include:

- Issuing benefits for a different form of milk
- Substituting cheese, yogurt, tofu and soy beverage for milk in the quantities allowed
- Substituting the allowed CVB for juice
- Tailoring the dried beans/ peanut butter options from the model food packages
- Tailoring the whole grain options from the model food packages
- Tailoring the type of cereal (infant vs. adult) in food packages for children and women with qualifying conditions.

Tailor the food package based on access to refrigeration, food storage and cooking facilities. Guidelines include the following:

- Determine the best packaging for juice and provide education (i.e. juice boxes vs. frozen vs bottled juice).
- Determine the best form of milk and size of container.
- Provide peanut butter and/or nut and seed butters unless there is a compelling reason not to, such as an allergy or inability to handle the food consistency.