

The Research on WIC

WIC makes a measurable difference in the lives and improves the health of nutritionally at-risk women, infants and children. The WIC Program has earned the reputation of being one of the most successful Federally-funded public health nutrition programs in the United States. Studies conducted by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and other non-government entities detail the success and cost-effectiveness of the nutrition intervention provided by WIC:

Improved Birth Outcomes and Savings in Health Care Costs ^{2,3,4,5,6}

- Fewer premature births and infant deaths
- Reduces low birth weight rates by 25 percent and very low birth weight rates by 44 percent
- A greater likelihood of receiving prenatal care
- Savings in health care costs from \$2.89 to \$3.50 for each dollar spent on WIC during the first 18 years of life

Improved Diet and Diet-Related Outcomes ^{3,4,5,6,7}

- WIC increased children's intake of iron, zinc, vitamins A, B6 and C, and folate
- WIC has a major impact on reducing anemia among children and improves children's general health status
- WIC participation is associated with an acceleration of growth for infants and children's weight and length/height

Improved Infant Feeding Practices ^{1,5}

- WIC promotes breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant feeding, consistent with the goals and objectives of Healthy People 2010 and the Policy Statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics
- WIC mothers who receive breastfeeding instruction and peer counseling have a higher breastfeeding initiation rate and breastfeed longer than eligible non-participants

Improved Rates of Childhood Immunizations and Regular Source of Medical Care ^{3,4,5}

- WIC participation has a positive impact on the likelihood of children having more up-to-date immunizations
- WIC participants have better access to health care and are more likely to use both preventive and curative health services for a wide range of health conditions, compared with eligible non-participants

Improved Cognitive Development ³

- WIC participation helps to ensure proper cognitive development because infants who experience nutritional deficiencies that are serious enough to disrupt their linear growth during infancy are at increased risk for cognitive and academic problems during school-age years

Summary

- WIC decreases the incidence of iron deficiency anemia in children
- WIC reduces fetal deaths and infant mortality
- WIC reduces low birth weight rates and increases the duration of pregnancy
- WIC improves the growth of nutritionally at-risk infants and children
- WIC improves the dietary intake of pregnant and postpartum women and promotes proper weight gain in pregnant women
- Pregnant women with prior WIC participation receive prenatal care earlier
- Children enrolled in WIC are more likely to have a regular source of medical care and more up to date immunizations
- Children who receive WIC benefits demonstrate improved intellectual development
- WIC significantly improves children's eating behaviors and parental feeding practices

References

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