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Taney County Health Department



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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

October 9, 2009

WIC Changes Food Packages

Focus on increasing breastfeeding infants and healthier food choices

Effective October 1, 2009, the Women's, Infants, and Children's (WIC) nutrition education, supplemental food program, has implemented new food packages for participants. The revised food packages add new food categories and offer optional substitutions for some of the current food choices. This is the first significant change in food packages in more than 30 years.

The reason for the changes is to encourage more women to breastfeed their babies and help fight obesity. Obesity is considered a major public health concern in the nation and in Taney County. "Breastfeeding is the healthiest option for babies and mom's," said Lyn Konstant, Missouri WIC Director. "Breastmilk contains all the nutrients a baby needs for the first six months and reduces the risk of allergies, asthma, diabetes and certain childhood cancers."

Breastfeeding also helps a new mother lose the weight she gained during pregnancy and helps her uterus return to normal size, Konstant said. Babies who are breastfed have lower rates of obesity as they grow older.

The changes in food packages are intended to better meet the needs of the wide range of WIC participants. The changes include:

- WIC clients can purchase whole grains and fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables.
- Beginning at 6 months, all infants receive infant fruits and vegetables, while fully breastfed infants also receive infant meats.
- Soymilk and tofu may be given as an alternative to milk, with medical documentation.
- Canned beans are offered as an alternative to dry beans.
- The amount of milk, eggs, juice, and cheese is reduced for women and children.
- Juice is eliminated for infants.
- The amount of infant formula is reduced for partially breastfed and older infants.

The new food packages are lower in fat and cholesterol, higher in fiber and limit added sugar and sodium," said Konstant. "These new options should help WIC participants improve their diet and maintain a healthy weight."

"The WIC program in Taney County serves approximately 1,977 participants per month," said Tammy Drake, WIC coordinator with the Taney County Health Department. "About ten percent of infants in Taney County are breastfed the first 6 months."

We are excited to introduce the changes to our participants and their response has been positive, Drake said. The food choices offer healthier alternatives that contain less fat and sugar that along with nutrition

education should help reduce the incidence of childhood obesity, which is a health priority in Taney County.

The WIC program is offered at both the Taney County Health Department locations in Branson and Forsyth. For more information about how to qualify for WIC visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org or call the Branson office at (417) 334-4544 or Forsyth office at (417) 546-4725.

WIC is an equal opportunity program and services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.
