

**NE LESSON CODE BF-000-35**  
***WIC Food Packages & The Importance of Exclusive Breastfeeding  
in the First Month***

**LESSON DESCRIPTION**

This class is designed to educate pregnant participants about food package choices for moms and infants and the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for at least the first month.

**OBJECTIVES**

Participants will be able to:

- Discuss food package options available for new moms and infants
- Name two reasons why exclusive breastfeeding in the first month is important.

**MATERIALS**

*WIC Food Packages for Moms and Infants*, Stock numbers 13-06-13124 and 13-06-13124a

*The Hospital Experience: What to Expect & How to Make it Memorable*, Stock numbers 13-06-13120 and 13-06-13120a (for optional activity)

**Note about New Lesson Survey Forms:**

The first few times a new lesson is presented, staff and participants need to complete the survey forms attached at the end of this lesson. Please note that the *Staff Survey Form* is different from the *Participant Survey Form*. Only 10-20 participant surveys need to be completed. Please mail completed new lesson surveys to:

Delores Preece  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
Nutrition Services Section  
PO Box 14937 MAILCODE 1933  
Austin, Texas 78714-9347

## Important Background Information for Instructors

The primary reason women discontinue breastfeeding is for reasons having to do with low breast milk supply. A major cause of insufficient milk is unnecessary supplementation in the first few weeks postpartum — a time when a mother should be breastfeeding exclusively and frequently in order to establish her milk supply.

In the first few weeks after birth, receptors for prolactin - the milk making hormone - multiply in the mother's breast. **The development of prolactin receptors in the breast is believed to be related to early frequent suckling stimulation and milk removal - so the more often a baby breastfeeds in the first few weeks after birth, the more receptors are developed.** The milk making process gradually transitions to more of a supply and demand response system in the first few weeks of breastfeeding – where the mother's body responds to her baby's demand by adjusting the speed of milk production upward or downward according to the amount of milk removed from the breast.

WIC food packages for moms and infants were designed to better promote and support the establishment of successful long-term breastfeeding – by encouraging moms to exclusively breastfeed for at least the first month postpartum. Encouraging and helping moms to exclusively breastfeed for at least the first month will help assure they set a good milk supply, making it easier to return to work and maintain a good breast milk supply if they must start supplementing with expressed breast milk or formula during the work day.

New moms have only two food packages to choose from in the first month postpartum — either an exclusively breastfeeding package which will help ensure moms establish a good milk supply or a formula feeding package.

WIC staff should stress the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in the first month as early in a woman's pregnancy as possible. New moms will be encouraged to exclusively breastfeed and choose the exclusively breastfeeding food package for at least the first month postpartum to help them protect and build their milk supply. However, all new moms should understand they have a choice of either the exclusively breastfeeding or the formula feeding package in the first month postpartum.

A small Texas WIC study revealed that when women were presented with the different food package options depicted in *WIC Food Packages for Moms and Infants*, the women were far more likely to choose the exclusively breastfeeding food package based on the extra foods for the mom and baby, the breastfeeding counselor support, and the breast pump availability. **Be sure to point out the extra incentives for choosing the exclusively breastfeeding food package** during individual counseling and this class.

## ICEBREAKER

Start the class by introducing yourself and telling a little about what your role is in helping WIC participants at your clinic. If you are a peer counselor, tell the class participants what a peer counselor is, how you were trained, and the support you offer to WIC participants. Then do the icebreaker.

State the following: **What have you all heard about breastfeeding?**

Validate any breastfeeding concerns and provide brief but targeted education for each concern, reminding them of the materials they may have already received that address common concerns (ex. breastfeeding education bag contents) then state,

**In this lesson we are going to talk about how you can get breastfeeding off to a good start. You will also learn about WIC food package options for moms and infants.**

## DISCUSSION

**I've given you each a brochure that includes information on food package choices that are available to new moms and infants.**

Pass out *WIC Food Packages for Moms and Infants* now if you have not already done so.

**Before we talk more about the food packages, please open your brochure to pages 4 and 5 where it discusses the reason WIC encourages all women to breastfeed their babies.**

Read the following.

**Breastfed babies:**

- **have fewer infections and illnesses**
- **have a lower risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)**
- **have better brain development**
- **continue to receive protection even after breastfeeding has stopped. For example, breastfed babies are less likely to be overweight or have diabetes in childhood, adolescence and as adults**
- **Breastmilk is always available in times of emergency and bad economic times**

**For moms, breastfeeding:**

- **burns up to 600 calories a day which makes it easier to lose post-pregnancy weight**
- **reduces your risk of getting breast and ovarian cancer later in life**
- **helps you develop a very strong bond with your baby**
- **In addition, you will be starting a tradition of healthy habits and beautiful memories in your family and you will increase the likelihood that your children will go on to breastfeed their babies which will result in healthier generations in the future.**

**These are just a few of the benefits of breastfeeding. Have any of you heard of any other benefits of breastfeeding?**

Allow participants a chance to call out other benefits of breastfeeding. Then continue the class.

**WIC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that women breastfeed their babies for at least a year but it can be hard to reach this goal unless you exclusively breastfeed, or feed your baby *only your milk* and nothing else in the first month.**

**Exclusive breastfeeding in the first month is very important for establishing a good milk supply. The first several weeks of breastfeeding “sets” your milk supply. It’s as if your baby is “placing an order” for the amount of milk he or she will need to grow. If you use formula in the early weeks, your milk supply may be set at a lower volume than your baby actually needs.**

**The way you build your milk supply is by breastfeeding frequently and avoiding supplements. Any amount of formula use in the first month can interfere with building a good milk supply. That is why WIC discourages formula use by breastfeeding moms during the first month. However, new moms will still have a choice between two food packages in the first month postpartum – either the exclusively breastfeeding or the formula package.**

Ask participants to turn to pages 10 and 11 of their brochure.

**Pages 10 and 11 show the exclusively breastfeeding food package. It includes a lot of extra food for the mom for a full year and also for the baby in the second six months. Breastfeeding moms are encouraged to choose this food package for at least the first month because it doesn’t contain formula which can interfere with building a good milk supply.**

Ask participants to turn to pages 14 and 15 of their brochure but to keep a finger in the brochure at the exclusively breastfeeding food package so they can flip back and forth to compare. If you have participants who are sitting next to each other, ask one of them to keep their brochure open to the exclusively breastfeeding food package and the other to turn to pages 14 and 15.

**Pages 14 and 15 show the formula package. Because this package contains formula, moms who choose this package will get much less food and only for the first 6 months postpartum rather than 12 months for exclusively breastfeeding participants. Formula fed babies also get far less food in the second six months.**

**You will also notice that the amount of formula an infant receives varies throughout the year. So even if a mom is receiving the maximum amount of formula allowed in this package, it may not be all the formula her baby needs. A mother who chooses this package should be prepared to purchase some formula on her own.**

**So you’re probably wondering what happens after the first month, right? After the first month, moms can continue to choose the exclusively breastfeeding food package and provide only breastmilk to their baby — the healthiest choice — or moms can choose to combine breastfeeding with formula feeding by picking either the mostly breastfeeding package on pages 12 and 13 or the formula feeding package on pages 14 and 15.**

**Now turn to page 9 and I’ll review how exclusive breastfeeding in the first month can positively affect your WIC benefits for the first year. Look at the answers to the question, how does exclusive breastfeeding during the first month affect my WIC benefits during my baby’s first year?**

- **If you set your milk supply at a high volume, you will have an easier time maintaining your milk supply if you have to return to work or school and start using a pump, or if you need to combine formula with breastfeeding after the first month for any reason.**

- Again, WIC gives you only a limited amount of formula; you are responsible for purchasing the rest. If you build a good milk supply in the first month, you can breastfeed any time you and your baby are together to avoid the need to purchase additional formula. Even if you can only breastfeed your baby in the evenings and on weekends, it will save you money in formula costs, and you and your baby will still receive some health benefits from breastfeeding.
- Also, if you exclusively or mostly breastfeed, you are eligible to receive WIC food benefits for a full year and will also receive more food for your baby. If you only or mostly formula-feed, you will get less food for your baby, and you will not get any food from WIC for yourself after your baby is 6 months old.
- And lastly, if you have your baby early or need to return to work, WIC can provide you with a free breast pump to help you establish and maintain your milk supply as well as support from breastfeeding counselors.

If you are not doing the optional activity, skip to the evaluation now.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Now pass out *The Hospital Experience: What to Expect & How to Make it Memorable*.

**I am giving each of you another brochure that has tips to prepare for the hospital visit and gives you an idea of what to expect at the hospital. Common hospital practices are listed and explained so you will know why they do them - like having your baby placed on your chest right after delivery and sharing a room with your baby on page 7.**

Ask participant to turn to the back cover of the brochure.

**Attached to the back cover you will find an Infant Feeding Plan. All of the hospital practices listed on the infant feeding plan will help you exclusively breastfeed and establish a good milk supply. While most hospitals do many of the practices listed on the feeding plan, they may not do all of them unless you request it. This brochure gives you a way to do just that.**

**The Infant Feeding Plan can be removed from the brochure, filled out, and taken to the hospital to put on your chart. While it is recommended that you check all the boxes on the plan, it allows you to choose which hospital practices you want and don't want. There is no way you can control everything that happens in the hospital but the infant feeding plan gives you a place to start by making your wishes clear.**

Now ask participants to turn to pages 2 & 3 of their brochure and remind them of the importance of the first two points under "during your pregnancy."

- Learn as much as you can about breastfeeding and
- Create a support system.

Remind them of the materials they received at their pregnancy certification and encourage them to share the brochures and the book and watch the DVD with their loved ones. Ask them to share the materials they received today with their loved ones as well. Remind them that the second part of the DVD is instructional and will help them get breastfeeding off to a good start.

Then wrap up the lesson with the evaluation.

## EVALUATION

So to make sure you have understood the points made in this lesson, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

**1. Supplementing with formula in the first month does what to a mother's breast milk supply?**

Answer: Decreases it.

**2. What is the best way to establish a good breast milk supply?**

Answer: Breastfeed exclusively and frequently for the first few weeks and avoid formula.

**3. What is the food package that we recommend you choose in the first month?**

Answer: Exclusively breastfeeding

**4. Name some reasons why exclusive breastfeeding in the first month is so important.**

Possible Answers:

- It's healthier for mom and baby.
- It "sets" my milk supply or helps me establish a good milk supply.
- It will help enable me to use my milk as a backup if I have to start supplementing with formula after the first month.
- I will get more food from WIC and can receive food benefits for longer.

And if optional activity was used:

**5. What tool did you receive in class today that will help you exclusively breastfeed in the hospital?**

Answer: The Infant Feeding Plan in the *Hospital Experience* brochure

**The Importance of Exclusive Breastfeeding in the First Month**

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**New Lesson Staff Survey**

LA # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Was the lesson easy to read and follow?  
 Yes                       No
2. Was it adequate for explaining the changes to the WIC food packages?  
 Yes                       No
3. What changes would you suggest for improving the lesson? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How was the participant feedback?  
 Positive                       Negative                       Indifferent
5. Was the Spanish translation appropriate for your participants?  
 Yes                       No
6. This lesson may be modified and sent out again to local agencies after food package roll out. How likely would you be to continue the use of a slightly modified version of this lesson after food package roll out? (Circle one)

1

2

3

4

5

Very likely

Somewhat likely

Not likely

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**New Lesson Participant Survey**

LA# \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. I am: (You may circle more than one)

- a. pregnant
- b. breastfeeding
- c. parent of an infant
- d. parent of a child
- e. family or friend

2. How much did you like the lesson?

- a. a lot
- b. a little
- c. not at all

3. Do you feel like you have a pretty good understanding of the new WIC food packages for mom and infants?

- Yes                       No

4. What is the most helpful thing you learned from the discussion today? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you plan to breastfeed before this class?

- Yes                       No

6. Do you think you will breastfeed now?

- Yes                       No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your comments***