

**WIC** WOMEN  
INFANTS  
CHILDREN

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

# VERMONT WIC PROGRAM & SHOPPING GUIDE



# VERMONT WIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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Vermont WIC Program

Vermont Department of Health

[healthvermont.gov/family/wic](https://healthvermont.gov/family/wic)

[wic@vermont.gov](mailto:wic@vermont.gov)

800-649-4357

802-863-7333





## WIC Program Benefits

WIC is a nutrition program for you and your growing family. There are four parts to the WIC program.

- **Nutrition Education.** Nutrition information, tools and solutions for parenting, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.
- **Breastfeeding/Chestfeeding Support.** To help you meet your goals.
- **Healthy Foods.** WIC foods include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, peanut butter/beans, cereal, juice, infant foods and formula.
- **Healthcare Referrals.** Personalized referrals to health services and other community resources.



## Your WIC Journey

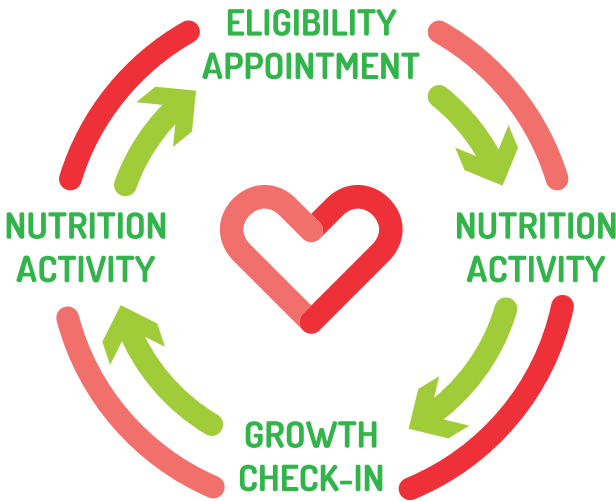
### **Parents-to-be, new parents and babies**

While you're pregnant, WIC supports you to learn about breastfeeding/chestfeeding and newborn behavior. At your first appointment, we'll schedule your mid-pregnancy check-in and nutrition activities.

WIC nutrition services continue for new parents and babies, offering breastfeeding and chestfeeding support, weight checks, and monthly foods.

### **Children up to age 5**

As your baby grows, WIC is here to support your family and will see you about every 6 months until your child's fifth birthday. In between appointments, you choose the nutrition activities that work best for you.



## Getting Started: WIC Visits

### WIC eligibility appointments

Your WIC appointments are scheduled about every 6 months.

Each WIC appointment may include:

- Income, Identity and Vermont Residency documentation
- Growth and health assessment, including an iron check once a year
- Nutrition consultation
- Referrals to other health services and community resources

# Nutrition Activities

## Information, tools and support



In between WIC appointments, you will complete a **nutrition activity**. Nutrition education is one of WIC's most important benefits. Along with your monthly WIC foods, you'll have what you need to grow a healthy family.

There are three types of WIC nutrition activities. You choose the nutrition activity that best matches your learning style, interests and schedule. Completing two nutrition activities each year, between WIC appointments, will keep your WIC food benefit account active.



### Local nutrition activities

To find a list of nutrition activities in your area:

- ask your WIC nutritionist,
- visit [healthvermont.gov/family/wic#wiccalendar](https://healthvermont.gov/family/wic#wiccalendar),
- call your [local WIC office](#).



### In-person counseling

Ask your WIC staff about your personal nutrition goals. You can make an appointment to fit your schedule or even meet by phone.



### Online learning

[WICHealth.org](https://www.wichealth.org) is WIC's online nutrition education resource. Choose from a variety of lesson topics when it's convenient for you. To set up your account, see the next page.

# Online Nutrition Activities



- Complete lessons anytime, anywhere you have internet access
- Use a computer, smartphone or tablet
- Lessons count as your WIC Nutrition Education Activity
- Visit the Health eKitchen section for recipes and cooking videos.

You'll need your **6-digit WIC household ID number** to create an account on [wichealth.org](http://wichealth.org). If you don't have it, call your [local WIC office](#) for help. Your WIC household ID is: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 1: Set up your account

- Go to [wichealth.org](http://wichealth.org)
- Click the "Sign Up" button on [wichealth.org](http://wichealth.org)
- Select your preferred language and your state (Vermont).
- Choose your Agency and Clinic (your local WIC office).
- Enter your 6-digit WIC household ID. If your household ID has only 5-digits, type a "0" in front.
- Choose a Username and Password, enter your Email and submit an answer to a Security Question. Write these down so you remember them.
- Click "Register".
- Enter information about you and your child.

## Step 2: Complete a Lesson

- Login to [wichealth.org](http://wichealth.org)
- Click "Begin" to browse or narrow topics, then choose a category and a lesson to complete.
- Follow instructions to complete lesson.
- Answer End of Lesson questions.
- Click "Submit" to receive your certificate - it will also be sent to your local WIC office.

### Visit Often:

Use a computer or smartphone to complete lessons anywhere you have internet access.

Completing a lesson counts as your nutrition education activity for your WIC food benefit renewal.



## Breastfeeding Support

You already know that breastfeeding/chestfeeding is best for you and your baby. WIC is here to support you to reach your infant feeding goals.

**Knowledge + Support + Confidence = Success.**

### You can do it!

#### Learn about breastfeeding.

Read. Attend classes. Talk to your WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor and other breastfeeding or chestfeeding supporters.

#### Enlist help and plan ahead.

Share plans with your family and friends. Work with your doctor and employer to get the support and help you need to be successful.

#### Be confident.

Most lactating parents make the right amount of milk for their babies. Your milk is perfect for your baby at every stage of development.

### WIC can help!

We're here to help parents succeed. WIC offers:

- Extra WIC foods for lactating parents
- Breastfeeding peer counselors
- Referrals to community lactation consultants and other support
- Breast pumps
- Breastfeeding groups and classes





## Healthy Foods

Each family member enrolled in WIC gets a monthly food package designed for their nutrition needs. The amounts and types of foods depend on if you are pregnant or breastfeeding/chestfeeding and the age of your infant or child.

WIC foods are added to your account the 1st of the month on a **3-month cycle** after completing a WIC appointment or nutrition activity.

Use your family's **Vermont WIC card** to purchase your WIC foods at the grocery store. The WIC card works just like a debit card but is specific for your WIC food account.

You can **shop throughout the month** at any WIC authorized grocery store. Find a complete list of stores at: [healthvermont.gov/wicshopping](http://healthvermont.gov/wicshopping).

**See the Shopping with Vermont WIC section for more information on how to shop for your WIC foods.**



## Healthcare Referrals & Community Programs

WIC connects you to healthcare providers, community organizations and other local resources. These may include:

- 3SquaresVT and other food resources
- Pregnancy and pediatric care
- Dental care
- Help to quit smoking
- Drug and alcohol counseling
- Immunizations
- Home visiting
- Head Start and preschool programs

Call WIC anytime to find the local resources you need for your family.

# Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf> from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax:  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email:  
[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

# Participant Rights and Responsibilities and Notice of Privacy Practices

## As a Vermont Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program participant, I understand the following:

1. WIC Certification periods vary by participant type:
    - a. pregnant women, until six weeks postpartum;
    - b. infants/breastfeeding women, through the month of the infant's first birthday;
    - c. children, for twelve month periods up to age five years; and
    - d. non-breastfeeding women, through six months postpartum.
  2. When my and/or my child(ren)'s certification period ends, WIC Program benefits also end.
  3. I will receive information about nutrition and health, including nutrition education, breastfeeding support, WIC foods, and referrals to other health services.
  4. To continue my WIC benefits, I must attend all certification and nutrition education appointments.
  5. I have the right to have information I give to the WIC program treated as confidential.
6. The Vermont Commissioner of Health may authorize use and disclosure of information about my participation in WIC for non-WIC purposes. Such information will be used by state and local WIC Offices and the programs listed above ONLY for program administration, coordinating benefits with other programs and improving WIC services and activities.
  7. Race/ethnicity information is collected for statistical reporting requirements only and does not affect my participation in the WIC Program. Standards for eligibility and participation in the WIC Program are the same for everyone, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, handicap, or sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age or disability.
  8. WIC staff may verify information I have provided. If I provide false information, I may not get WIC benefits; I may have to pay back money for WIC foods already purchased; and I may be prosecuted under state and federal law.
  9. If I move out of Vermont I can request a Verification of Certification (VOC) to access WIC benefits in the new state.

I understand that WIC participant information may be shared with the following programs: Home Visiting Programs, Foster Parent Services, Immunizations, and Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS). A separate Release of Information is required for WIC to share information with any other entity.

## WIC Program Participant Rights:

- If I disagree with any decision that affects my WIC eligibility or benefits, I have sixty (60) days from the date of notice to file an appeal and ask for a fair hearing to present the reasons for objection by me or by my representative(s), such as a relative/friend/legal counsel or other spokesperson(s).
- Information to request a fair hearing may be obtained from any local WIC Office or from the State WIC Office at: Vermont Department of Health, WIC Program, 108 Cherry Street, PO Box 70, Burlington, VT 05402-0070. You may also call us to request a hearing at 1-800-649-4357.
- Continuation of benefits may be requested pending the outcome of the fair hearing appeal. The request must be filed within 15 days from the date of my Notice of Ineligibility. However, no benefits can be continued beyond a participant's certification period.
- WIC is an equal opportunity program. If I believe I have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age or disability, I may contact the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC, 20250 directly, or request assistance from the WIC staff to do so.

## WIC Program Participant Responsibilities:

1. To avoid loss of WIC benefits, I must attend all WIC appointments.
  2. If I cannot make a WIC appointment, I will call in advance to reschedule. If I miss a recertification or nutrition education class, WIC benefits may be reduced.
  3. I will notify WIC staff when I change my address or move to a different city or state so my WIC can be transferred to a different district or state.
  4. WIC foods are for the participating family member. I will not sell or give my WIC benefits to anyone else and will contact WIC if I need to change my food benefits.
  5. All formula/medical food exchanges must take place at the WIC Office. Any unused infant formula must always be returned to the WIC Office.
  6. I will keep my WIC card in a safe place, and I will not give my personal identification number to anyone except someone who will make WIC purchases as my additional head of household or proxy.
  7. If my Vermont WIC card is lost or stolen, I will report this to the WIC Office immediately. I understand that it is possible the current month's benefits will not be replaced.
  8. I understand that WIC benefits are to be purchased only at WIC authorized stores within the month designated and consumed by the participant for whom they were issued, and that unused benefits do not carry over to future months.
  9. I am responsible for training my additional head of household or proxy to use the card at the store.
  10. I am responsible to ensure that my alternate shopper adheres to these same responsibilities.
- Disqualification, suspension, prosecution, and cash recovery may occur for:
- A. Misuse of WIC benefits such as exchanging/selling or intending to sell the Vermont WIC card or food items purchased with WIC benefits verbally, in print, online, or by any other method for cash, credit, or non-food items;
  - B. Purchasing/receiving foods not on the WIC Approved Foods List;
  - C. Physical abuse, threat of physical abuse, or verbal abuse to WIC or grocery store staff.

# Substance Use

## During Pregnancy and While Parenting

You want the best for yourself and your family, and WIC is here to help.

You know the importance of a healthy pregnancy and raising healthy children, and the problems that substance use can cause during pregnancy and while parenting.

### Alcohol

There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy. Alcohol use can increase the risk that your child could:

- Be born too small, too early, or stillborn
- Have intellectual and developmental delays

### Nicotine and Tobacco

Cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, and vaping products contain nicotine. Nicotine use while pregnant increases the risk that your child could:

- Be born too small, too early, or stillborn
- Have breathing problems or trouble sleeping
- Have behavioral problems later in life

### Cannabis

There is no known safe amount of cannabis use during pregnancy. Cannabis use can increase the risk that your child could:

- Be born too small
- Have lower muscle tone
- Have delays in weight gain or motor skills development



## Other Drugs and Medications

Anything that gets you high can harm your baby. Using drugs or misusing prescription medications while pregnant increases the risk that your baby could:

- Be born too small, too early, or stillborn
- Be born dependent on drugs
- Have a birth defect, trouble breathing, or other health problems

Talk with your health care providers about all medications you are taking or thinking about taking to make sure they are okay to take while pregnant.

## Things you can do

- Avoid or take a break from using substances while pregnant, breastfeeding/chestfeeding, and parenting
- Keep you and your children away from secondhand smoke
- Quit smoking and using nicotine products
- Ask for help

## Get free, confidential help at:

**Vermont Helplink:** [vthelplink.org](http://vthelplink.org) or call 802-565-LINK

**Vermont Quitline:** [802Quits.org](http://802Quits.org) or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW

## Learn more about substance use and pregnancy:

[1MoreConversation.com](http://1MoreConversation.com)

# SHOPPING WITH VERMONT WIC

Understanding Your WIC Food Benefits

Checking Your Balance

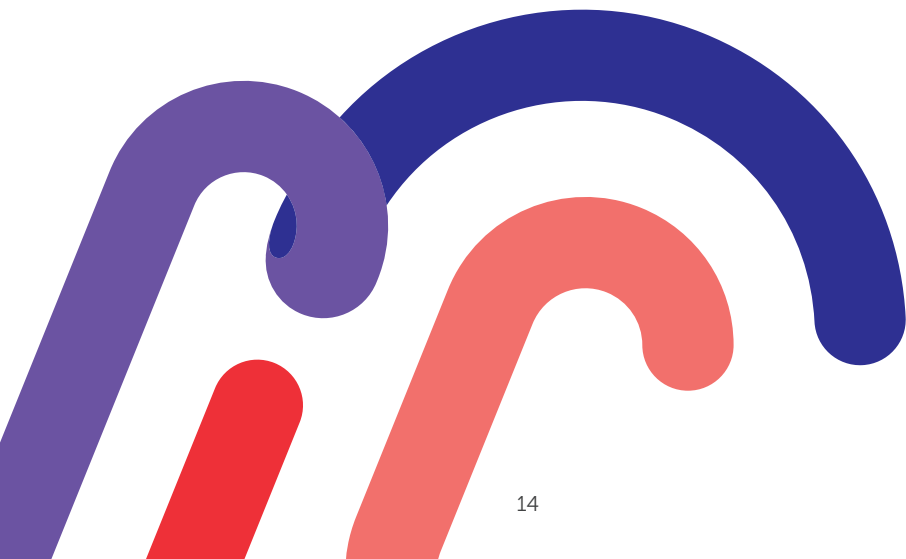
Choosing WIC Foods

Know the Checkout System Where You Shop

At the Checkout

Reading your Receipt

5 Tips for Successful Shopping





# Understanding Your WIC Food Benefits

WIC approves many different brands and products in each of the WIC food categories: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, peanut butter/beans, cereal, juice and infant foods.

The WIC-approved foods are found in the [Vermont WIC Foods guide](#). The specific types and amounts of foods you can get will depend on several factors, including:

- If you're pregnant
- If you're breastfeeding or chestfeeding and how much
- The ages of your children



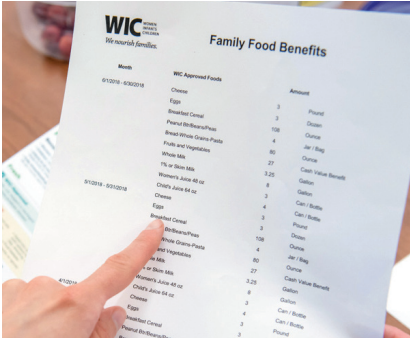
If you're fully breastfeeding you get more of some foods such as cheese, eggs and peanut butter and additional items such as canned fish.

## Food packages change as your child grows.

Key milestones are 6 months, 1 year and 2 years. For example, when your baby turns 6 months old, infant foods are added to the monthly food package. When your child turns 1 year old, a child food package that includes whole milk, whole milk yogurt and other foods is issued. When your child is 2-5 years old, these change to low-fat or nonfat milk and low-fat or nonfat yogurt.

## Family Food Benefits list

Your Family Food Benefits list shows the foods you can purchase each month. You'll get this list at each WIC appointment. **See Checking Your Balance on the next page.**



# Checking Your Balance

**Know your WIC food balance before you go to the store.** Your food benefits become available on the first day of the month and expire at midnight on the last day of the month.

You can stretch your grocery budget and save money by buying all your WIC foods each month. So, it's helpful to keep track of your purchases and to know what you have left BEFORE you get to the store.

There are several ways to check your current WIC food balance before you go shopping:



**Call 1-855-769-8890** (this number is on the back of your WIC card). Enter your 16-digit WIC card number, and the automated system will tell you what you have left in each food category.



**Go online to connectbt.com**, select Vermont WIC and log in. The first time you visit the site, you'll need to create an account with a User ID and Password.



**Check your last receipt** for the ending WIC benefit balance. The "ending" balance listed is what you have left in each food category. If you're not likely to save the receipt, take a picture of it with your phone. **See Reading Your Receipt on page 21.**




At the store: You can go to the Customer Service area and **ask for an account balance inquiry** for your card or ask the cashier for a balance inquiry before any items are scanned.

# Choosing WIC Foods



To choose the right WIC foods at the store, match what is found on your Family Food Benefits List with the brands in the Vermont WIC Foods guide. Make a grocery list of the WIC brands and sizes before you go to the store.

Not all stores carry every brand and size of WIC foods. You'll become familiar with what your favorite store carries.

 Use the **WICShopper mobile app** at the store to help you choose the specific product sizes and types of foods that you have on your Family Food Benefits list.

In the store, look for "WIC" on the item's shelf tag or the green "Vermont WIC Approved" shelf tags to find WIC-eligible foods. **Watch the video *Look for Specific Sizes and Types of Foods*** for more tips.



# Know the Checkout System Where You Shop

WIC authorized stores can use two different types of WIC checkout systems: integrated and separate. Your WIC card cannot be used in self-checkout lanes.



## Integrated checkout

When a store is **integrated**, it means that all your groceries – the WIC and non-WIC items – can be mixed together at checkout and rung through at the same time. The store's system knows which items are Vermont WIC-approved, so when you swipe your WIC card first, they are subtracted from your account. Always pay with your WIC card first, then use another form of payment for your non-WIC items.

When you are new to WIC, it can help to separate WIC items in the cart and process them through checkout first so that you're sure everything you've selected is WIC-approved. Then pay for your non-WIC items.

Most of the big grocery stores have **integrated** systems. Many smaller stores are also integrated. Some of these stores need you to show your WIC card or tell the cashier you are using WIC before items are scanned.



## Separate checkout

When a store has a **separate** checkout system, they are using two different scanners.

You will need to tell the cashier that you are using your WIC card before any item is scanned.

Separate your groceries and pay for your WIC foods first so you will know if something isn't covered by WIC. Then pay for your other non-WIC items in another transaction. Some small stores may have you choose a specific lane for WIC.


If you're new to a store and not sure of their checkout, ask at customer service or check VT WIC's website, [healthvermont.gov/wicshopping](http://healthvermont.gov/wicshopping).

# At the Checkout

## To make checking out with your WIC foods go smoothly, follow these steps:

1. Separate your WIC foods from your other groceries – at least at first. This will help you while you're getting to know which foods are WIC-approved.
  - \* Note: If you have more than 40 WIC items, you will need to divide them into two transactions.
2. Always use your WIC card first. Pay the difference with another payment type, including 3SquaresVT/SNAP, credit or debit card or cash.
3. Swipe your WIC card when prompted and enter your four-digit PIN.
4. Approve your WIC purchase. You will be asked to review a display screen or printed list of the WIC items you are buying. Make sure the WIC foods are listed correctly. Press "Yes" to accept the transaction or "No" to decline. Once you press "Yes" no changes can be made.
5. Keep your last receipt. It shows your remaining food benefit balance and it can help your WIC office if issues arise.

## What if a food item is not covered by WIC?

- Check the  **WICShopper mobile app** or the **Vermont WIC Foods guide** to make sure the food is allowed.
- Check your balance to see if you have enough food benefits for that item.
- Make sure you have the correct size or brand that is WIC-eligible.

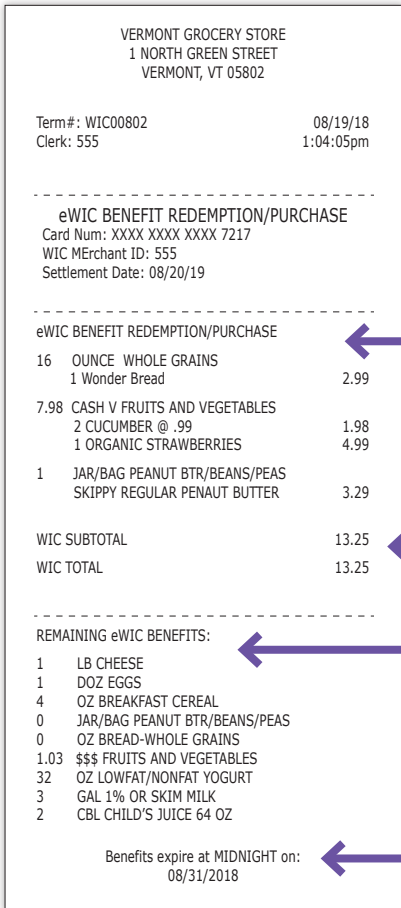
If you think the food should be allowed but it's not going through, take a picture of the bar code/UPC and front and back label and share it with your [local WIC office](#).

If you choose to purchase these foods on your own, WIC cannot reimburse you. But if you change your mind, you can return the items at customer service.

Contact your [local WIC office](#) if you have questions.

# What if my card doesn't work?

- Try again. Sometimes swiping your card a second time is all you need to do.
- Ask the cashier if they can manually enter your card's number. If the magnetic strip is damaged, inputting the card number manually will work to connect to your WIC account.
- Too many incorrect PIN attempts? Call your [local WIC office](#) and they can unlock your PIN. Or, you can call 1-855-769-8890 to reset or change your PIN over the phone.
- Contact Vermont WIC at 1-800-649-4357 or [WIC@Vermont.gov](mailto:WIC@Vermont.gov). Tell us which store, which lane, the date and time of the transaction and what you were trying to buy. Send a picture of your receipt if possible.



# Reading Your Receipt

Receipts are different at each store, but they will always include this information about your purchase and benefits:

- 1 List of foods you just bought
- 2 WIC purchase totals
- 3 The WIC foods you have left to buy this month
- 4 The last day you can buy the rest of your WIC foods for the month

# 5 Tips for Successful Shopping

## For new WIC shoppers

Shopping for WIC foods can be challenging at first. It gets easier once you learn what's in your food benefits and how to find the items and brands you want at the store. Here are some tips from other Vermont WIC families.

1

### Shop with someone who knows WIC

If possible, go shopping with a friend or family member who is an experienced WIC shopper.

In the beginning, there's a lot to get to know about shopping with WIC, so it is helpful to go shopping with someone who is an experienced WIC shopper. Ask a friend or family member who has been doing it a while and can show you some things to look for.

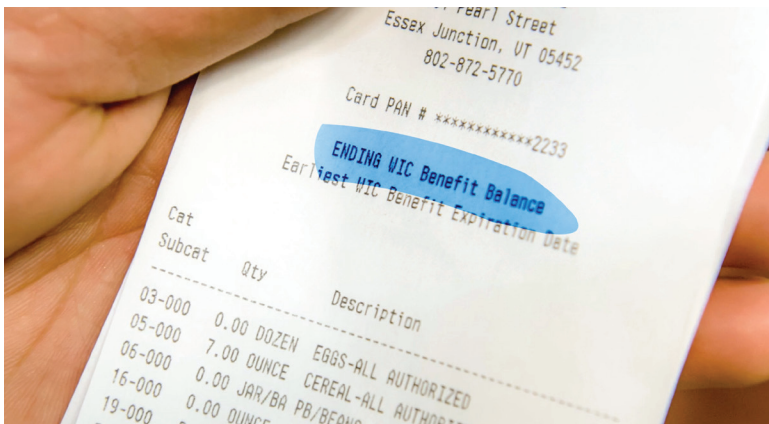
The first time or two, shop early or late in the day when the store is not busy. Your local WIC office staff are happy to go shopping with you too; contact them for a grocery tour.

2

### Know your WIC balance

Since you'll want to buy all of your WIC foods each month, check your account balance before you go shopping.

See **Checking Your Balance on page 16** and **watch the video [How to Check your WIC Balance](#)** for ways to check your WIC Balance.





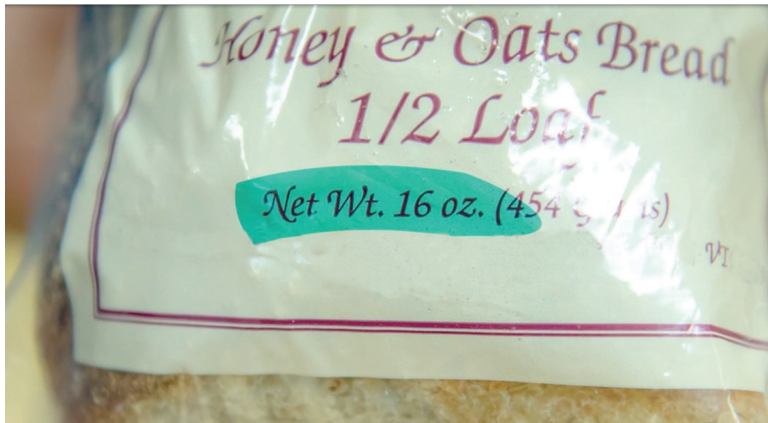
### 3

## Check brands and sizes

Pay attention to **brands** and **sizes** of foods in each category.

You'll want to check the size of every item on your

Family Food Benefits list against what you want to buy using the Vermont WIC Foods guide. **Watch the video [Understanding Your WIC Food Benefits](#).**



### 4

## Try a WIC-only purchase first

While you're learning which foods you can get on WIC, it can be helpful to separate your WIC items from your non-WIC items and try a WIC-only purchase first. That way, if you accidentally picked up an item that's not on your food benefits (like wrong size or brand) you will know. Since some smaller stores require you to separate your WIC items and pay for your WIC foods first, this will also help at checkout.

### 5

## Ask for help

Let's face it, WIC shopping can be complicated at first. If you're having any trouble don't give up! We're here to help – just ask!

### Help at the store:

The customer service staff where you shop can help you find a specific food item and help you figure things out if something doesn't go through.

### Help from your WIC office:

The WIC staff at your local office can help you understand your benefits or go shopping with you.

# Notes



# YOU GOT THIS.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

### **Stay connected**

It's easy to stay in touch with WIC! Vermont WIC's text messaging service includes appointment and nutrition activity reminders, health and nutrition tips, and more. Just be sure WIC knows if your phone number changes.

### **Call your local WIC office if:**

- You have any questions about your WIC benefits.
- You need to make or change your appointment.
- Your WIC card is lost, stolen or damaged.
- You have questions about WIC foods or amounts.
- You move or change your address.
- You change your phone number.

## **NEED HELP? CONTACT YOUR LOCAL WIC OFFICE:**

*WIC Staff Use:  
Place local office contact label here*