

## Retailer Bulletin



VDH VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH

[Message from Dr. Mandeep Virk-Baker](#)

[New 2018 Approved Food List Announcement](#)

[Changes to Retail Store Manual](#)

[Preparing for the New Food List](#)

[Key 2018 Dates](#)

[Distribution of New Food List](#)

[UPC Changes and Product Information](#)

[What to do When Things Go Wrong](#)

[Not to Exceed \(NTE\)](#)

[Annual Compliance Letter](#)

[Shelf Label Requirements](#)

[Health District News](#)

[Important Links](#)

---

### [Message from Dr. Mandeep Virk-Baker](#)

I wish everyone a Happy New Year 2018! I am very excited to relocate with my family to Virginia from the West Coast and very much enjoying our new home state. I am thrilled to join the Virginia WIC team and for the opportunity to improve the health of pregnant women, infants and children of our communities. The current food insecurity rate in VA (11.8%) translates to over 912,790 people who do not know where their next meal will come from. Nearly 23% of households with children in Virginia struggle to provide food for their family. Through our WIC program, we improve the health outcomes of women and their children through nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support, nutritious supplementary foods and provide necessary community resources to the WIC families.

WIC participants' experience with our Program and shopping at the WIC approved stores is extremely important to us. For our Program planning and improvement efforts, we incorporate data and feedback from a number of ongoing initiatives to improve the customer service. These include the WIC Participant Survey, nutrition and breastfeeding knowledge assessments and webinars with our local agency staff, as well as the Retail Advisory meetings with our WIC retailers. Additionally, we are constantly evaluating and strengthening our outreach efforts to improve our Program reach and eliminate barriers; for example, taking WIC clinics to the bedsides of birthing hospitals to guided grocery store tours.

As we reflect on our programmatic successes for 2017, I am thankful to you for providing nutritious foods

to our WIC families. Some of the highlights include a successful collaboration between Virginia WIC, Virginia Cooperative Extension and authorized vendors for the WIC on Wheels project. Our preliminary data from the project indicated an increase in fruits and vegetable redemption for our participants taking the guided grocery store tours. As a registered dietitian and nutrition scientist, I am pleased to see this upward trend in fruits and vegetable redemption and look forward to sharing project outcomes from the complete data in the coming months. As you may know, the Virginia WIC Program has expanded its new food list to include new items like yogurt and wheat pasta, as well as including national brands for selected foods. We are looking forward to the implementation date of April 1, 2018 and training has begun with our local agencies and vendor partners.

I am thankful to you for your commitment in providing nutritious foods to our WIC families, and I am looking forward to working with you all.

Regards,



Mandeep Virk-Baker, PhD, MPH, RD  
Director, Division of Community Nutrition  
Virginia Department of Health

---

### [New 2018 Approved Food List Announcement](#)

A new 2018 WIC Approved Food List will be effective on April 1, 2018. This new food list contains most of the same food categories and products as the 2016 version. Two new food categories have been added to the list of approved items. Please take a few minutes to study the 2018 list in its entirety. The most significant changes are below:

#### **Changes for each food subcategory**

- Beans, Peas, and Lentils – all varieties are now approved
- Breakfast Cereals – national brands added, hot cereals shown by brand vs. variety
- Cheese – national brands added
- Peanut Butter – national brands added
- Whole Wheat Bread and Tortillas -- contains images for approved brands
- Whole Wheat Pasta (**new**) - contains images for approved brands
- Yogurt (**new**) –approved brands of 32-ounce plain or vanilla flavor
- Brown Rice – no change
- Canned Fish – no change
- Eggs – no change

- Fruits & Vegetables – no change
- Infant Formula – no change
- Milk – no change
- Soy Milk – no change

### **Overall Changes**

- Larger pages, more pages
- Maintains tabbed format, but in different order
- Many images of products and brand logos, arranged by brand (vs. variety)
- “Included” and “Not Included” is now “BUY” and “DON’T BUY”
- Expanded Shopping Tips
- New store brands added in most food subcategories

### **Changes to Minimum Stocking Requirement (MSR)**

- None, but new items can be used to meet MSR
- **No grace period.** MSR is to be met at all times during the transition period.

### **Changes to Shelf Label Requirements (Grace Period 1 Apr - 30 Apr)**

- New brands added to food categories that currently require shelf labels will need to display a WIC Shelf Label (e.g. Cheese, Breakfast Cereal, Juice, Peanut Butter)
- All WIC eligible Yogurt will require a WIC shelf label.
- Whole Wheat Bread and Beans, Peas and Lentils will no longer require a WIC shelf label.
- Whole Grain Pasta will not require a WIC shelf label

As before, all WIC eligible items in food categories that require a shelf label must display an approved WIC shelf label. Retailers can determine if they want to put WIC shelf labels on items in food categories that do not require shelf labels. If a shelf label is used on one or more items in a food category where shelf labels are optional, shelf labels are required for all items in that food category.

---

### **[Changes to Retail Store Manual](#)**

Due to changes associated with the new 2018 Food List, a few changes to the Retail Store Manual are required. Only sections D1 ([Approved Foods and eWIC Food Benefits](#)), D2 ([Minimum Stocking Requirement](#)), and D4 ([Signage and Shelf Labels](#)) are changing, but retailers will need to replace the old section with the updated pages. Official notice of these changes will be sent once the changes have been finalized. We will provide the specific sections that need to be replaced and retailers can either print them from our website or request a hard copy be sent.

**Note: This notification will serve as the Official notice of these changes.** Retailers can either print the changes from our website or request a hard copy.

---

## Preparing for the New Food List

- Prepare your cashiers and other store personnel – provide training to them.
- Review with your cashiers the major changes to the WIC Approved foods, i.e., new food choices and brands.
- Use the Retailer Supply Request web form to order additional copies of the WIC Approved Food List and Infant Formula Flyer. A starter set of the new Approved Food List will be sent to each store via a special mailing.
- After the effective date of the new Food List, discard all outdated WIC Approved Food Lists (2016 and before).
- Keep the current formula flyer.
- At each cash register that accepts the eWIC Benefit Card, retain a copy of the new WIC Approved Food List and Infant Formula Flyer – remember you are required to have these resources readily available at your registers.
- Confirm your point of sales (POS) contractor or IT support is downloading a copy of the WIC Program's Approved Product List (APL) daily to ensure your integrated POS system has the most current information available to you and your customers. State-issued stand beside terminals (VeriFone VX570) should be updated automatically.
- Review changes to the signage and shelf label guidelines and identify the products that require shelf labels.
- Start posting shelf labels after April 1, 2018, and have all shelf labels posted by April 30, 2018.
- Review the "Not to Exceed (NTE)" article below.
- Save and share this bulletin with your cashiers and store personnel and see what questions they may have about these upcoming changes.

Remember - Training is the key to ensure your cashiers are up-to-speed when these food changes are implemented. If you have any questions about compliance please contact your assigned [Vendor Liaison](#) or the WIC Vendor Team at (804) 864-7800 or [wic\\_retailer@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:wic_retailer@vdh.virginia.gov).

---

## [Key 2018 Dates](#)

- February 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> -- Webinars were held for all Retailers. Links to the webinar slides and a video of the recorded session are in the “Important Links” section at the end of the bulletin.
  - March 1<sup>st</sup> – New stores can apply for WIC using newly added items
  - April 1<sup>st</sup> – Effective Date of the New 2018 Food List
  - May 1<sup>st</sup> – WIC Shelf labels are required on all new products with a shelf label requirement
- 

### **Distribution of New Food List**

The 2018 Food Lists will be sent directly to all authorized WIC retailers as soon as they become available. Current plans are to send one English version of the Food List for each WIC register, one Spanish version for each five WIC registers, plus one additional English and Spanish version for the WIC Retail Store binder. The Food Lists will be mailed from a third party to each retailer’s address of record. Additional copies can be ordered using the Retailer Supply Request [Form](#) or [Web Form](#), which are available from our [WIC Resources website](#). We expect distribution to begin in March, but an email announcement will be sent once they have been received from the printer and have been mailed.

---

### **UPC Changes and Product Information**

Beginning March 15, 2018, WIC authorized retailers will be able to view or download a list of newly approved UPCs and product information from the [WIC Resources website](#); however, these new UPCs will not be active in the Approved Product List (APL) until the 2018 New Food List takes effect on April 1, 2018. All retailers should confirm that the APL is downloaded and that the new items are marked as eligible for WIC purchase on that date.

---

### **What to do When Things Go Wrong...Incident Reporting**

We encourage authorized retailers to report any incidents or problems related to eWIC cardholders by completing the [Retailer Incident/Complaint Form](#) (WIC #387). Keeping us informed of these incidents as they happen allows us to address them in a timely manner and reduce repeat occurrences.

Incidents to report include:

- Participants were abusive and/or rude to store personnel while redeeming eWIC food benefits
- Repeated attempts to purchase ineligible food items with eWIC food benefits. List brands, food items, and UPCs if applicable

- Attempts to return WIC food items for ineligible exchange, store credit, or cash
- Attempts to purchase excess Cash Value Benefits, not understanding the additional payment requirement
- Not understanding how to use eWIC benefit card (e.g., PIN, eligible or available food items, spend dates etc.)
- Offers to sell WIC purchases or their eWIC benefit card.

The Vendor Liaison assigned to the store location will process the complaint and may follow-up with your staff for additional details to determine the resolution and/or corrective action required. The WIC Program strives to ensure that complaints are resolved in a timely manner to improve the services provided to all participants and retailers. For incidents of a more serious or urgent nature, and to ensure prompt customer service, please contact your assigned WIC Vendor Liaison or the State WIC Office at (804) 864-7800.

Issues with missing UPCs for eligible products should be submitted using the UPC Update [Form](#) so that they can be reviewed for meeting the eligibility requirements, and if so, added to the Approved Product List.

---

### **Not to Exceed (NTE)**

The Not to Exceed (NTE) limit that is in place for all UPCs is based, in part, on recent sales history. Because the new UPCs added with the new 2018 Food List update have no sales history, we have assigned NTEs to start that are based on similar items and suggested retail prices. Please note that it will take at least 7 days of sales for the NTE to adjust to real-time prices at the store level. If you have a concern about an amount reimbursed to you for an item, please wait until after April 8, 2018 to submit it for investigation. After that time, please send any concerns to Amy Romero ([amy.romero@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:amy.romero@vdh.virginia.gov)). You will need to provide the full UPC, item name, and pricing information.

---

### **Annual Compliance Letter**

Annually, the Virginia WIC Program distributes an annual compliance and program integrity letter as a reminder to authorized WIC stores and corporate contacts. As you may recall, the WIC Program performs several important compliance monitoring functions, including:

- Infant formula audits/reviews
- Unannounced on-site stocking visits
- “Secret shopper” compliance buys
- Desk review of formula purchasing records

The [Annual Compliance Letter](#) is available on our retailer "[Resources](#)" webpage.

---

## Shelf Label Requirements

The new 2018 WIC Approved Food List will display the green WIC "Wholesome Informed Choices" logo for categories that require a WIC shelf label. The Signage and Shelf Label guidelines in the Retailer Manual (effective April 1, 2018) has been updated to reflect these new shelf label changes. WIC shelf labels are required for all WIC-eligible products in the following categories:

- Breakfast Cereal (including approved national brands)
- Cheese (including approved national brands)
- Juice (frozen, liquid & refrigerated)
- Milk (Skim & 1% Only)
- Peanut Butter (including approved national brands)
- Yogurt (approved brands and sizes only)

WIC approved items in food categories where WIC shelf label are optional (beans, bread, eggs, infant cereal, infant food, formula, fish, fruits and vegetables, brown rice, and tortillas) must all be either labeled or all unlabeled for each food category. Please note that to avoid confusion, only one type of WIC shelf label should be used; either the green "Wholesome Informed Choices" shelf labels or the approved custom WIC shelf labels. **WIC shelf labels for the new items should not be displayed prior to April 1, 2018, and all required WIC shelf labels changes should be in place no later than April 30, 2018.**

---

## Health District News

- The Lenowisco Health District held a Virginia Food Access Network Day event at the Wise County Health Department on September 29, 2017. The event was a step towards their long-term goal of eliminating childhood hunger by increasing participation in nutrition assistance programs and increasing access to affordable, healthy, and local foods. The event helped WIC participants and community members learn more about what affordable, healthy, and local foods.
- The Lord Fairfax Health District hosted a Playdate at the Park for each county in the district for Breastfeeding Awareness Month. Celebrating with each county at a local park increased attendance and let local mothers meet in a non-clinical setting to get to know one another. These family-friendly, "Milk Way" themed events had arts and crafts tables, breastfeeding information stations, snacks, and recognized each mother as a Breastfeeding Star, all to strengthen the breastfeeding community.

We would love to collaborate with Virginia retailers for similar community events to support and strengthen healthy nutrition and breastfeeding initiatives across our state.

---

## Important Links

- [WIC Homepage](#)
- [WIC Retailers](#)
- [WIC Retailer Resources](#)
- [\\*NEW\\* 2018 Approved Food List](#)
- [List of changes to the Approved Product List](#)
- [Current Approved Product List](#)
- [Contact Us \(list of assigned Vendor Liaisons\)](#)
- Retailer Incident/Complaint form WIC #387
  - [Instructions](#)
  - [Form](#)
- Retailer Supply Request Form
  - [Web Form](#)
  - [Paper Form](#)
- UPC Update Form
  - [Instructions](#)
  - [Form](#)
- Webinar Materials
  - [Slides](#)
  - [Video](#)

---

*Copyright © 2017 Virginia Department of Health, WIC, All rights reserved.*

**Our mailing address is:**

Virginia Department of Health  
Division of Community Nutrition | WIC  
Vendor Compliance Unit, 8th Floor  
109 Governor Street  
Richmond, VA 23219-3623  
804-864-7800

---

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in

or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

---

This email was sent to [Allan.Astley@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Allan.Astley@vdh.virginia.gov)  
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)  
Virginia Department of Health · 109 Governor Street · 10th Floor · Richmond, VA 23219 · USA