

# Public Health Update

February 2005

## The Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition (WIC) Program

By Sally Swartz, MS, RD

### **How can Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) Registered Dietitians and nutrition educators help you and your patients?**

TCHD offers free nutrition and counseling services that may help your low-income patients. This Public Health Update describes our program so you can recommend this service to eligible patients.

### **What is the WIC Program?**

The TCHD WIC program is the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program. Participants receive nutrition counseling, vouchers for healthful foods to supplement a person's diet, breastfeeding support, and referrals. Referrals include area physicians, housing, legal aid, food banks, and mental health services.

### **Who does WIC serve?**

The WIC Program serves low-income women, infants and children up to age five who are in need of nutrition services. Services are provided at no charge to participants.

### **How many people are served by WIC?**

Almost 25,000 residents of Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties are served by the Tri-County Health Department's WIC program. In 2004, eighty-three thousand in Colorado and approximately eight million people in the United States received WIC benefits. These services are funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

### **Who is eligible for WIC services?**

Eligible clients must meet all of the following:

- A woman who is pregnant, up to 6 months postpartum (1 year if breastfeeding) or a child/infant under 5 years old
- Persons who meet the income guidelines of 185% of the poverty level. (For example, a family of 4 would qualify if gross income is \$2,907 per month or less)
- Clients who live in the county/counties providing the services
- Must be at nutritional risk

### **What does WIC provide to children and women?**

WIC offers vouchers for foods high in one or more of the following nutrients: protein, calcium, iron and vitamins A and C. The standard food package consists of low-fat or non-fat milk, cheese, eggs, peanut butter, dried beans, cereal and juice. Registered Dietitians (RD's) oversee nutrition evaluation and provide counseling for high-risk clients. We have certified lactation counselors on staff who provide breastfeeding education and support. Each WIC clinic has available electric breast pumps to loan to working clients and those with hospitalized infants.



Tri-County Health Department • Serving Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties  
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Richard L. Vogt, M.D., Executive Director

### **What does WIC provide to infants?**

WIC currently provides standard iron-fortified formulas, Similac and Isomil, to bottle-fed infants. Special formulas for medically diagnosed conditions require a physician's prescription. Physicians requesting special formulas are asked to provide a medical diagnosis and time limit for the prescription.

### **What are some of the benefits of WIC?**

The WIC Program has been successful in improving the health of pregnant women, infants and children and in reducing health care costs. Various studies indicate that WIC has achieved the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Fewer premature and low birth-weight babies
- Pregnant women are more likely to get prenatal care
- Reductions in Medicaid costs
- Improved dietary intake
- Reduced rates of iron deficiency anemia
- Better cognitive development in WIC children
- Improved immunization rates
- Higher breastfeeding rates
- Decreased infant mortality

### **How does enrollment in WIC improve immunization rates?**

In recent years at Tri-County, we have assessed the immunization status of WIC clients and linked children who were not up-to-date with our immunization services. These efforts have substantially improved immunization rates. For example, assessment of immunization rates in our Aurora clinic indicated an up-to-date rate of 74.4% at baseline. After our intervention, the rate increased to 84.5%.

### **What is the WIC program doing to prevent childhood obesity?**

We have chosen healthy lifestyle promotion as an obesity preventive message. We encourage parents to be active with their children. Our key diet emphasis is on increasing vegetables and fruits consumption. Goals are set at each visit by WIC participants to help families work toward healthier living. The rate of overweight children aged 2-5 in our clinics is 9.6%, which is below the national rate of 14.3%.

### **Tri-County staff would like to coordinate with area healthcare providers!**

While WIC provides nutritious food and nutrition education, WIC clients in Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas counties depend on area health care providers for medical care. Therefore, collaboration between the WIC program and health care providers is beneficial to these clients. Childhood obesity and breastfeeding are key areas for WIC emphasis. To share our resources and approaches, Tri-County Health Department is developing information kits focusing on nutrition education for breastfeeding and childhood healthy weight. Dietitians are meeting with area physicians to determine what would be most useful to include in the kits. Final resource kits will be developed in the upcoming months. If you are interested in obtaining more information on these kits, WIC, or other nutrition services, contact Phyllis Holtan at 303-846-6271 or [pholtan@tchd.org](mailto:pholtan@tchd.org).

**For more information** please contact your state or local health department:

Tri-County Health Department  
(303) 220-9200 / 303-461-2342 (after hours and weekends)  
Fax: (303) 220-9208  
[www.tchd.org](http://www.tchd.org)

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
(303) 692-2700 / (303) 370-9395 (after hours and weekends)  
Fax: (303) 782-0338  
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/wic/wichom.asp>

United States Department of Agriculture  
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>.

Reference:

<sup>1</sup>CDPHE WIC Home Page, <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/wic/wichom.asp>

### **Tri-County Health Department WIC Clinic Locations**

#### **Aurora Office**

Altura Plaza (Courthouse Building)  
15400 E. 14th Place  
Aurora, CO 80011-5828  
(Colfax and Chambers)  
Phone: 303-341-9370 Fax: 303-367-2597  
Bus: #15 Colfax

#### **Brighton Office**

1295 Bridge Street #102  
Brighton, CO 80601  
(Near Bridge and 12th)  
Phone: 303-659-2335 Fax: 303-659-6090

#### **Castle Rock Office**

101 Third Street  
Castle Rock, CO 80104  
(West of Wilcox and Third)  
Phone: 303-663-7650 Fax: 303-688-8870

#### **Commerce City Office**

4201 E. 72nd Ave. Suite D  
Commerce City, CO 80022  
Adams County Service Center Building  
(72nd and Colorado Boulevard)  
Phone: 303-288-6816 Fax: 720-322-1500  
Bus: #48, #72

#### **Englewood Office**

4857 S. Broadway  
Englewood, CO 80110  
(Broadway, just north of Belleview)  
Phone: 303-761-1340 Fax: 303-761-1528  
Bus: #0 Broadway

#### **Havana Office**

10330 East Colfax  
Aurora, CO 80010  
(Colfax at Havana)  
Phone: 303-361-6010 Fax: 303-361-6309  
Bus: #15 Colfax

#### **Iliff Office**

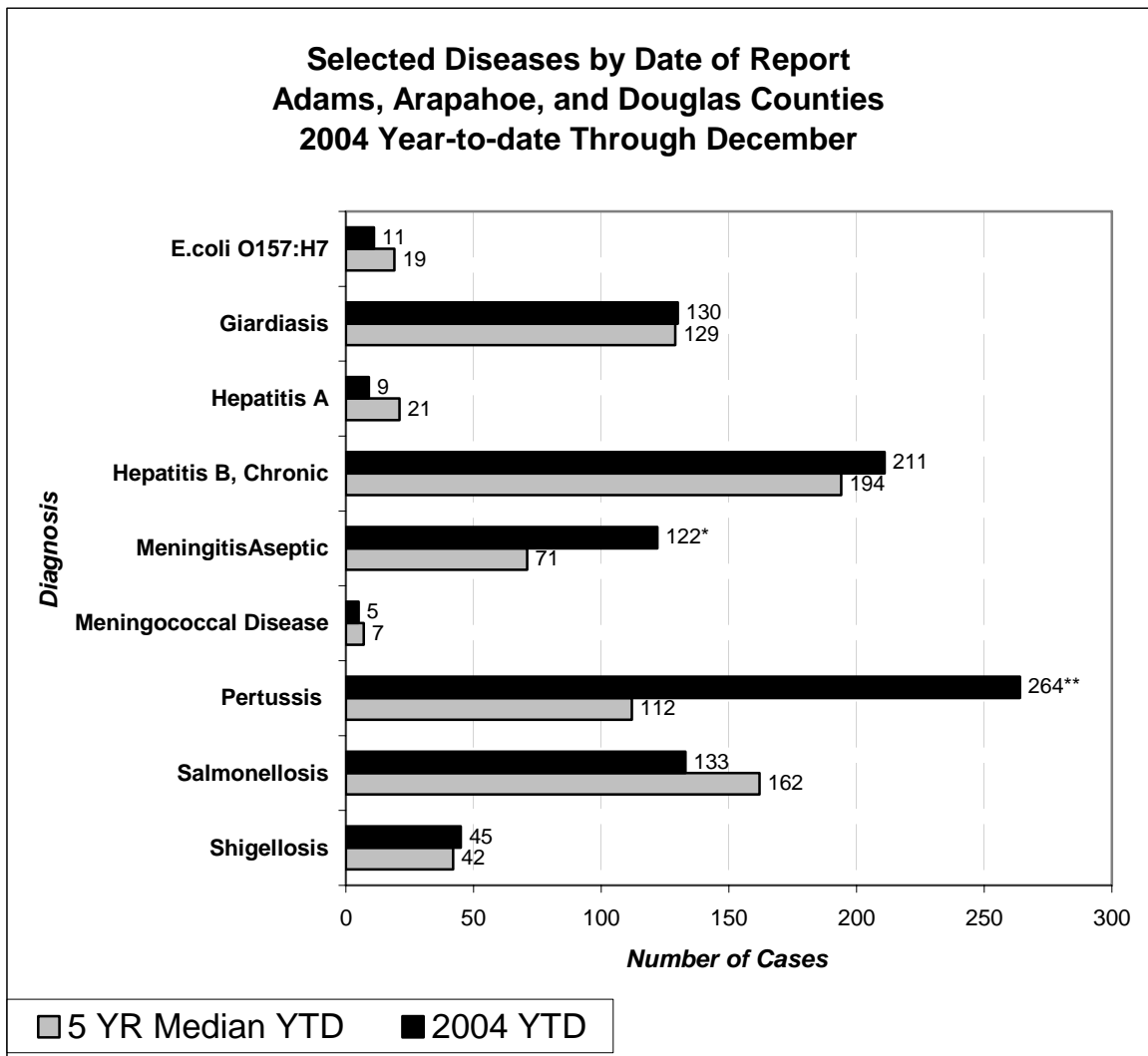
15559 East Iliff Ave.  
Aurora, CO 80013  
(Iliff and Chambers )  
Phone: 303-745-5858 Fax: 303-745-6146  
Bus: #53, #169

#### **Northglenn Office**

10190 Bannock #100  
Northglenn, CO 80264  
University of Phoenix Building  
(Near 104th and I-25)  
Phone: 303-452-9547 Fax: 303-452-9712  
Bus: #104

#### **Pecos Office-**

7290 Samuel Drive #130  
Denver, CO 80221  
Samuels Building  
(Near 72nd and Pecos)  
Phone: 303-426-5232 Fax: 303-426-5335  
Bus: #6, #72



\*The increase in cases of aseptic meningitis occurred mainly in the summer and fall months. It is likely a result of enteroviruses, however the serotype and etiology are unknown.

\*\*The increase in pertussis cases reported began in the month of March of 2004 and continues through the present. The state of Colorado and the nation are experiencing increased numbers.