



# MARYLAND

BETTER NUTRITION, BRIGHTER FUTURE

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INCREASED FRUIT AND VEGETABLE BENEFIT (Updated: 6/30/2021)**

### **What's going on?**

Most WIC participants get fruits and vegetables as part of their benefits. Before June this year, a woman on WIC could get \$11 per month to buy fruits and vegetables at the store. A child between ages 1-5 could get \$9 per month. Starting in June 2021, that fruit and vegetable benefit increased to \$35 per month. This will last through September 2021.

### **Is that \$35 total or \$35 per person?**

Per person. For example, if a mom is on WIC with her 3-year old child, then together they will get \$70 per month to buy fruits and vegetables.

### **Do all family members get the \$35?**

The \$35 increased benefit is for women and children ages 1-5 years.

### **When do I see the increased benefit?**

You'll get the increased fruit and vegetable benefit beginning on your June benefit start date for four months through September.

### **Why am I not getting the benefit at the beginning of June?**

You get the increased benefit on your June benefit start date. For example: If your benefits start on the 15th of the month, you will see the increased fruit and vegetable benefit on June 15. If you are not sure when your benefit start date is, contact your Local WIC Agency or download our smartphone app.

## **What happens in September?**

September will be the last month that you receive the increased fruit and vegetable benefit. The exact timing depends on your benefit start date. For example, if your benefit start date is on the 25th of the month, you will see the September increased benefit on September 25.

## **Does my increased benefit end on September 30?**

Probably not! It depends on your benefit start and end date. For example: If your benefits start on September 15, your end date will be October 14. That means you will have \$35 until October 14. On October 15, your fruit and vegetable benefit will return to what it was before June this year. We encourage you to make the most of your increased benefit while you have it.

## **Does this include increased Farmers' Market Checks?**

No. Farmers' Market Checks are separate benefits from WIC fruit and vegetable benefits. The Farmers' Market Checks have not changed.

## **Can I buy canned fruit?**

Yes! However, it has to be canned fruit that meets WIC guidelines. That means it has to be either packed in water or 100% juice with no added sugar. If you're not sure, you can download the Maryland WIC app on your smartphone. The app can scan a barcode at the store, and it will tell you if the item is WIC approved. This doesn't just work on canned fruit. You can also use it to scan any item you are unsure of.

## **Why am I getting more money for fruits and vegetables? And why is it only for 4 months?**

This is part of the American Rescue Plan which was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. One thing the American Rescue Plan did is increase the fruit and vegetable benefit for WIC participants. However, the American Rescue Plan only allowed this increase for four months. Different states chose different months to have this increase. Maryland chose June through September.

### **Can I use the \$35 at Farmers' Markets?**

Some farmers accept the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit. Ask them first before you make your purchase. Please remember that the WIC fruit and vegetable benefit is not the same thing as Farmers' Market Checks. Some farmers may accept Farmers' Market Checks but not the WIC benefit.

### **Why is this ending in September? Can't this be permanent?**

The American Rescue Plan which was passed earlier this year only provided for four months of increased fruit and vegetable benefit. Extending this benefit for longer would require Congress to pass another law. If this is important to you, we encourage you to contact your representatives in Congress to make your voice heard.