Tying WIC Food Packages to Risk Codes
Food Package

- Food packages are primarily tied to client category
  - Exclusively Breastfeeding women may have canned fish
  - 6-11 month old infants may have jarred baby foods
  - 1 year old children may have whole milk

- After client category, nutrition risk is tied to the food package
  - Main *nutrition* risk tied to food packages is food allergy and intolerance
Definitions

- Food intolerance – Occurs when an individual is not able to properly break down food
  - Response occurs in the digestive system
  - Could be due to enzyme deficiencies, sensitivity to food additives or reactions to naturally occurring chemicals in foods
  - Often, people can eat small amounts of the food without causing problems
  - Causes mild to moderate discomfort
Definitions¹

- **Food allergy**
  - Involves the immune system
  - If an individual comes into contact with a food they are allergic to, it may be life threatening
    - Eating (even microscopic amounts)
    - Touching
    - Inhaling
  - Many severe symptoms, including rashes, swelling, hives, vomiting, diarrhea, and respiratory distress
Allergies²

- Most food allergies are caused by only eight foods
  - Milk, Eggs, Peanuts, Tree nuts, Soy, Wheat, Fish, Shellfish
  - Milk, Eggs, Peanuts, Soy, Wheat, Fish – all available to participants on the WIC Program

- Very important to discuss food allergies with participants and their physicians
Milk

- Milk allergy – individual’s immune response to milk proteins
  - Most common food allergy in American children
  - Individual must avoid all dairy products, including lactose free products to avoid life-threatening reactions
Milk

- Lactose intolerance – individual’s body lacks the enzyme needed to digest milk sugars
  - Fairly common
  - May be able to eat small amounts of cheese, yogurt, other dairy products
  - Lactase enzymes are available in capsule or chewable tablet form to reduce symptoms
Milk

- If a participant has a milk allergy, the WIC program can offer
  - Soy Milk
  - Goat milk – should consult physician first; some individuals with milk allergy cannot tolerate goat milk

- If a participant has a milk intolerance, the WIC Program can offer
  - Lactose free or lactose reduced milk
  - Soy milk
  - Goat milk
Soy²

- More common in children than adults
- Soy-based packages are not standard for WIC participants
- If a participant has a soy allergy, avoid issuing the soy-milk food package
Eggs²

- Second most common allergy in children
- Most children outgrow this allergy by age 6
- Eggs can be removed from the WIC food package if egg allergy is a concern
- CPA should counsel on the importance of other WIC approved protein foods
  - Peanut Butter
  - Beans/Peas/Lentils
Peanuts²

- Often a very severe allergy
  - Higher rates of anaphylactic reactions than milk, eggs, or wheat
- Peanut butter is allowed for children and women on the WIC Program
- Peanut butter should be removed from food packages for individuals that have peanut allergy
- CPA should counsel on the importance of other WIC approved protein foods
  - Eggs
  - Beans/Peas/Lentils
Wheat²

- Most children outgrow wheat allergies by adolescence
- Important to avoid
  - Wheat, barley, rye, oats

- If a participant has a wheat allergy, the WIC Program can offer:
  - Brown rice
  - Corn tortillas
Wheat Allergy and Celiac Disease

- Celiac disease – auto-immune disorder where the body attacks itself when exposed to gluten
- Gluten is a protein found in many grains including wheat, barley, rye, and sometimes oats
  - Oats are often contaminated with wheat

- Symptoms of a wheat allergy usually appear in minutes to hours after eating wheat
- Celiac symptoms are usually GI related and may take longer to present
- Gluten-free foods are safe for people with wheat allergies
Fish²

- Fish allergies are more common in adults than children
- Pollock, salmon, cod, tuna, snapper, eel, and tilapia are the most common types of fish to trigger an allergic reaction
- Do not offer canned fish to exclusively breastfeeding women with fish allergies
Infants with Allergies/Intolerances

- Infants with lactose intolerance/milk allergy
  - Should be offered a soy-based infant formula
  - Ex: ProSobee

- Infants with allergies to both milk and soy
  - Should be offered a hypoallergenic formula
  - Ex: Elecare

- Always consult dietitian and physician when deciding on an infant formula for allergy
References
