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California Diabetes and Pregnancy Program

Date: November 25, 2003

To: Patricia Daniels, Director
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Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
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From: Cathy Fagen, MA, RD *CF*
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Long Beach Memorial Medical Services
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Re: Comments for Revisions to the WIC Food Package

The incidence of diabetes mellitus (DM) is on the rise in our country and many of our WIC eligible clients are at risk for gestational diabetes (GDM). When a WIC client is at risk for GDM or gets diagnosed with GDM, she should be counseled on using more whole grain foods and avoiding highly processed foods and/or foods containing quickly absorbable carbohydrates. Her food package should be altered so she has more of a selection from the foods that will not cause her blood sugars to rise (i.e., long cooking oatmeal vs instant cereals¹; fresh fruit and vegetables vs juices). These foods that are eaten in more of their natural state will also help keep the client full longer and may help reduce excess caloric intake and excess weight gain.

Pregnancy is a teachable moment. WIC may be the client's only source of nutrition education. What the woman learns in her pregnancy may have an effect on her risk of type 2 diabetes later in life. It also can have an effect on how she feeds her children who also may be at risk of type 2 DM. What the WIC counselor tells the client may go in one ear and out the other. But what the client is given in a food package will really make a difference in her education. We learn more by what we do than by what we hear or say.

¹Glycaemic index of cereal products explained by their content of rapidly and slowly available glucose.
Englyst KN, Vinoy S, Englyst HN, Lang V
Br J Nutr, 2003 Mar; 89(3):329-40

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NOV 28 2003