

February 9, 2021 Letter to Local Agency WIC Directors shared via email

The North Carolina WIC Program is aware of the Report from the Committee on Oversight and Reform as part of the U.S. House of Representatives. The “[Baby Foods are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury](#)” Report made public on February 4, 2021 presents information and data gathered from several baby food manufacturing companies. The Report discloses significant levels of some heavy metals in several packaged infant and toddler foods, specifically toxic heavy metals such as inorganic arsenic, lead, cadmium, and mercury.

The National WIC Association indicates support for the implementation of the subcommittee recommendations as a means to ensure the optimal health and wellbeing of the nation’s youngest children. While the Report highlights action to support changes in industry standards and manufacturing, there are many ways to support our WIC families in selecting healthy options **now** to minimize infant and children’s heavy metal intake.

In supporting our families and providers, many statements and resources are available including:

- “[Heavy Metals in Baby Food](#)” as offered by Healthy Children.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics
- “[Congressional report finds toxins in baby food products](#)” statement from NWA in response to Congressional Report.

Echoing the recommendation of The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to minimize exposure to these heavy metals, we can support and encourage families to:

Serve a variety of foods. The WIC program supports these recommendations by offering a large selection of stage 1 and 2 single or blend infant fruit or infant vegetable foods that contain no added sugar, starch, or salt as part of the WIC food package for infants from 6 to 11 months of age. While some vegetables naturally contain higher levels of heavy metals, offering a variety of fruits and vegetables offers a diet rich in many vitamins and minerals while reducing risk for exposure.

Rotate the types of grains. Consider whole grain, iron-fortified infant cereal options other than rice cereal such as infant oatmeal, or whole wheat cereals. Limit intake of other processed snacks like puffs, teething biscuits, and crackers as they may have elevated levels of heavy metals.

Breastfeed. Breastfeeding reduces potential exposure to heavy metals from various sources. The WIC program offers breastfeeding support and education to pregnant and postpartum women. Additionally, the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program offers additional information, guidance, and support for breastfeeding families.

The WIC program promotes healthy habits and healthy families which includes supporting access to healthy foods. As additional information becomes available, we will continue to communicate recommendations and guidance for further actions to support the health and safety of the families we serve.

For questions, please contact your Regional Nutrition Consultant.

Thank you,