

# Increasing the WIC vegetable and fruit benefits results in large increases to both the amount and variety purchased



As more families faced new economic and nutrition security hardships during the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved an increase to the dollar amount provided for vegetables and fruits through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). Referred to as the Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for vegetables and fruits, the CVB was increased in June 2021 from \$9/month to \$35/month per child and revised 4 months later to \$24/month per child in October 2021. The current amount of \$25/month per child was adjusted for inflation in October 2022 and has been approved through September 2023. These changes presented an opportunity to track and document the spending habits of WIC participants through changes to the benefits they receive as part of their WIC food package.

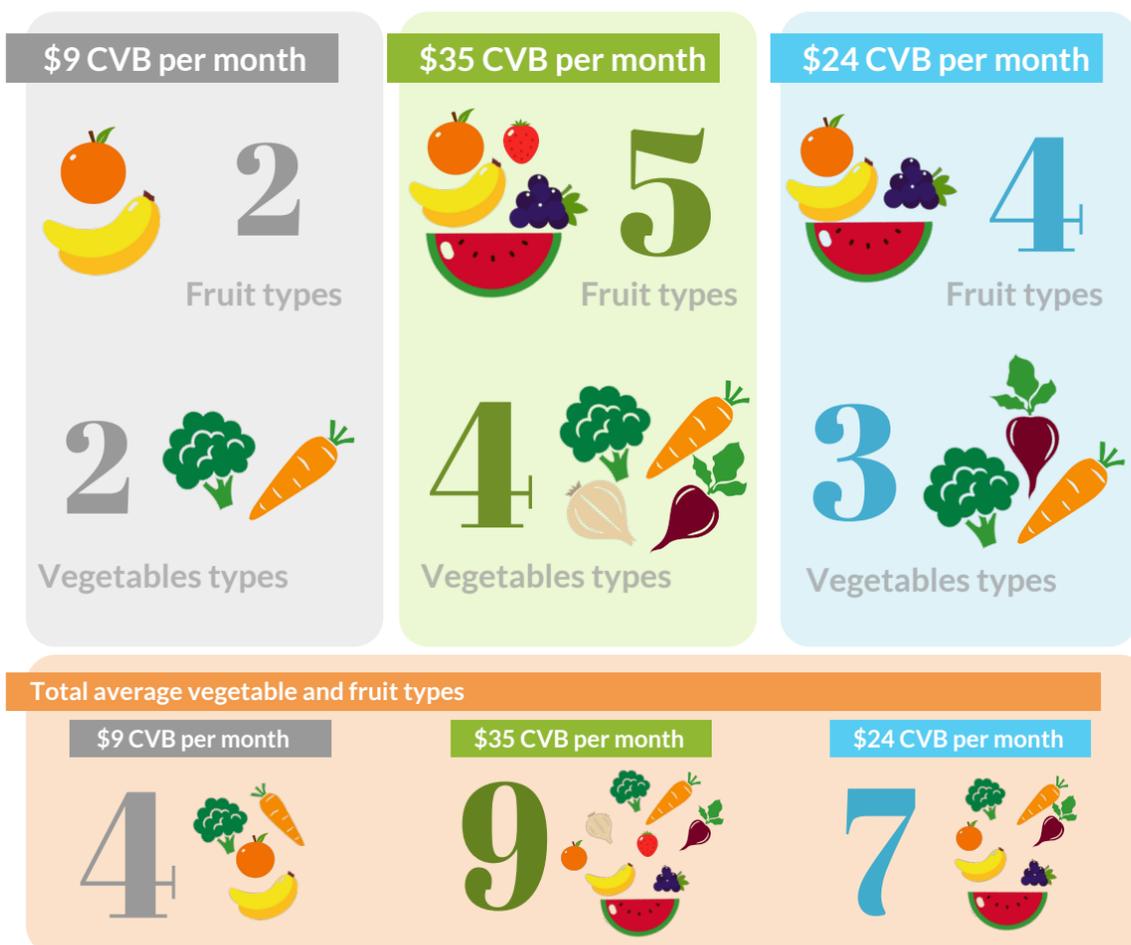
Analysis of spending habits of a longitudinal sample of over 1500 WIC families living in Southern California show substantial increases in both the average dollar amount spent and the variety of purchased vegetables and fruits as a result of the increase in CVB.

Figure 1 shows the average dollar amount of the CVB spent, demonstrating a large increase in the dollar amount spent on both vegetables and fruits. Figure 2 shows that the average number of vegetable and fruit types purchased monthly by WIC families at each CVB amount. With the higher CVB, WIC families add significantly more variety to their diet.

Figure 1: Total average monthly dollars redeemed by CVB amount and vegetable and fruit category



Figure 2: Average number of different vegetable and fruit types redeemed by CVB amount



Families with young children appear to benefit economically and nutritionally from the increased CVB by being able to purchase more types and amounts of vegetables and fruits. These data support making the increased CVB a permanent part of the WIC food packages.

**Before February 21, 2023, please submit your [public comment](#) in support of permanent increases to the CVB to ensure adequate access to vegetables and fruits for low-income families.**