



SELECTING AND PURCHASING
FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
A NUTRITION IN-SERVICE FOR STAFF

“Shipping is a terrible thing to do to vegetable.
They probably get jet-lagged, just like people.”

~ Elizabeth Berry



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A lesson on selecting and purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Who: Participants: WIC Staff, range of 2-15 participants with a varying degree of maternal, infant and child nutrition knowledge and WIC experience.
Leader: WIC RD/Nutritionist

Why: Purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables may be a new experience for some WIC clients. By exploring factors to consider when selecting and purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables WIC staff can better assist WIC clients in the utilization of their WIC fruit and vegetable checks.

When: A monthly in-service that is designed to be 30 to 60 minutes - depending on the discussion and the number of staff attending.

Where: The session was designed for a WIC classroom, meeting room or large office depending on the size of the group.

What: By the end of this session staff will have:

- Explored factors that affect their choice of fruits and vegetables to purchase.
- Identified criteria (quality, seasonality, freshness) for selecting fruits and vegetables.
- Matched fresh fruits and vegetables to their peak season.
- Categorized fruit by their ripening characteristics.
- Practiced using the fruits and vegetable cost tool from the WIC Food Brochure.
- Reviewed a fresh fruit and vegetable food safety handout and identified new information.

Materials Flip chart or white board and markers

Needed: Copies of:

- Interview questions provided on page 8
- Handout "FIGHTBAC! Six steps to Safer Fruits and Vegetables" -- printed from <http://www.fightbac.org/images/pdfs/ProducefactSheet.pdf>

- Fresh Choices in Washington WIC handout (3 page handout provided with in-service) Note: We are providing this handout, however, if available, staff may also use the WIC Food Brochure.
- In-service *Participant Copy*
- In-service *Feedback Form*

Background Please review before leading group:

Reading for • Print handout from

Leaders: <http://www.fightbac.org/images/pdfs/ProducefactSheet.pdf>

For Further review and consult:

- <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>
- <http://www.produceoasis.com/>

How:

- Schedule in-service.
- Review background information.
- Review in-service *Leader Copy* (*italicized print indicates leader speaking*).
- Prepare materials needed.
- Have fun!

Introduction / Warm-Up**2 minutes**

Welcome! I will be the leader for this month's nutrition training. I encourage all of you to participate. Together we can explore our topic and discover strategies to support our WIC clients.

By the end of this session you will have:

- *Explored factors that affect your choice of fruits and vegetables to purchase.*
- *Identified criteria (quality, seasonality, freshness) for selecting fruits and vegetables.*
- *Matched fresh fruits and vegetables to their peak season.*
- *Categorized fruit by their ripening characteristics.*
- *Practiced using the fruits and vegetable cost tool from the WIC Food Brochure.*
- *Reviewed a fresh fruit and vegetable food safety handout and identified new information.*

Part 1**10 minutes****Identifying your own habits when selecting fruits and vegetables**

Let's start our discussion about selecting and purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables, by exploring what we use as our own criteria. Please break up into pairs. Take three minutes to interview your partner regarding their latest purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables, using the following questions as a guide.

- *How often do you purchase fresh fruits and vegetables?*
- *Where do you purchase fresh fruits and vegetables?*
- *What factors do you consider when selecting and purchasing fruits and vegetables?*
- *What is challenging for you about purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables?*
- *Name one thing that would encourage you to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables?*

After three minutes have partners switch roles. Take three more minutes to interview.

Label a flip chart or white board with "Factors that affect selection and purchase."
Gather responses from participants.

Do you think our interview responses are typical of WIC families?

What differences do you think there would be?

Part 2**12 minutes****Selecting Fruits and Vegetables**

When selecting fresh fruits or vegetables, first look at the items appearance and the texture. Make sure the fruits or vegetables are not bruised or damaged. Fruit should feel heavy for its size. High quality, fresh vegetables are young, crisp and brightly colored. Store personnel in the produce department or a produce manager are usually happy to help select fresh produce and/or provide information about how to use a fruit or vegetable if you are not familiar with a particular item.

Seasonality

Thanks to modern shipping capabilities, we can now purchase most fruits and vegetables year round. However, for best flavor and quality, and lowest price, purchase fruits and vegetables during the peak season. Check your “seasonality savvy” by matching the fruit/vegetable to its peak season.

In the Participant’s Copy, this table has the fruits/vegetables mixed up with the seasons, so the participants can match them up. The following table is your guide for revealing the correct seasons for each fruit and vegetable.

Fruit/Vegetable	Season
Citrus	Winter
Melons	Summer
Apples	Fall
Pears	Fall
Berries	Summer
Asparagus	Spring
Corn	Summer
Pumpkin	Fall
Tomatoes	Summer
Cabbage	Fall

Reveal correct seasons.

Local Farmer’s Markets are a great place to identify what’s in season locally.

Ripeness

Many people often wonder how to tell if a fruit is ripe or not. Whether a fruit will continue to ripen or should be purchased ripe depends on the fruit. Think about what fruits continue to ripen after they are picked and which do not. Then review the two categories of fruit on the next page..

Will continue to ripen after being picked	Pick when ripe
Apricots	Apples
Bananas	Cherries
Cantaloupe	Grapefruit
Kiwi	Grapes
Nectarines	Oranges
Peaches	Pineapple
Pears	Strawberries
Plums	Tangerines
	Watermelon

Does anything surprise you about the list?

To speed up the ripening of fruits such as, peaches, pears, and plums, put them in a loosely closed brown paper bag (plastic bags don't work) at room temperature. Add a banana or apple to really speed things up.

Convenience

Some vegetables (lettuce, spinach, cabbage) are available pre-prepared in bags. While these items typically cost more, the added convenience may make them a better buy.

What are the times when you choose convenience over higher cost?

When are prepackaged products a better value?

Part 3

15 minutes

Purchasing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables may be a new experience for some clients. Using a produce scale and understanding price per pound versus price per item may be especially challenging. Tips that staff may share with clients to help them to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables with their WIC Fruit and Vegetable checks include:

- 1. Be patient. It may take you longer to select your items. Use your WIC fruits and vegetable check when you are not rushed and have plenty of time to choose your items.*
- 2. Look to see how the fruits and vegetables are priced. Items in the produce section are priced dollars per item or dollars per pound (lb.). Dollar per pound pricing requires you to weigh your items to figure out the total cost.*

3. *Learn how to use a produce scale. Produce sections typically have several scales available for your use. Place your items on the scale and then read the dial or electrical read out. This is the total weight in pounds (abbreviated as lb). Multiply this number by the cost. Use the tool in your WIC food brochure to help you.*
4. *Ask for help. Produce personnel can help you select and weigh your fresh fruits and vegetables.*

Pass out the handout “Fresh Choices for Washington WIC” to participants.
Review the handout.

Take ten minutes to complete the following scenarios.

You are a pregnant teen purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables for the first time. You have an eight dollar fruit and vegetable check. You would like to purchase bananas and apples. You choose a bunch of bananas weighing 2¼ lbs pounds at \$.69/lb. You also select four apples that weight 2 lbs and cost \$1.66/lb.

- *Using the tool on the handout, estimate the cost of the items selected.*
- *Would you need to adjust your purchase? If so how?*

You are a mother to a three year old and an 8 month old breastfed baby. You have a \$10 and a \$6 fruit and vegetables check. You choose a 2 lb bag of baby carrots priced at 2.99 each, 1½ lbs of broccoli priced at \$1.49/lb, a large bag of prepared lettuce costing \$3.49 each, two medium size tomatoes weighing 1 lb and costing \$3.49/lb and a 4 lb cantaloupe priced at \$1.49/lb.

- *Using the tool on your handout, estimate the cost of the items selected.*
- *Would you need to adjust your purchase? If so how?*

How much did you estimate the cost of the items at?

What adjustments did you suggest?

What do you think will be the most challenging for clients when purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables?

What additional suggestions do you have about purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables?

Part 4**10 minutes****Safe care and handling**

In pairs or trios take four minutes to review the handout "FIGHTBAC! Six steps to safer fruits and vegetables."

Identify what is new information for you.

Note what information you believe would be helpful for WIC clients.

We will share our observations.

Wait 3 minutes.

Who would like to share?

Closing**1 minute**

Thanks for participating today. We heard some great discussion and ideas that will help us to better serve our WIC clients.

Please fill out a Feedback Form – your input is greatly appreciated.

Collect Feedback Forms.

Make any notes you have as a leader.

Review participants' Feedback Forms.

Document this training.

Interview questions

- How often do you purchase fresh fruits and vegetables?
- Where do you purchase fresh fruits and vegetables?
- What factors do you consider when selecting and purchasing fruits and vegetables?
- What is challenging for you about purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables?
- Name one thing that would encourage you to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables?

A lesson on selecting and purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session you will have:

- Explored factors that affect their choice of fruits and vegetables to purchase.
- Identified criteria (quality, seasonality, freshness) for selecting fruits and vegetables.
- Matched fresh fruits and vegetables to their peak season.
- Categorized fruit by their ripening characteristics.
- Practiced using the fruits and vegetable cost tool from the WIC Food Brochure.
- Reviewed a fresh fruit and vegetable food safety handout and identified new information.

Part 1

Identifying your own habits when selecting fruits and vegetables

We will start by exploring what we use as our own criteria for selecting produce. Take three minutes to interview your partner regarding their latest purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables, use the *Interview questions* handout to collect your results.

Part 2

Seasonality

Match the following fruits and vegetables to the correct season.

Fruit	Season
Asparagus	Winter
Cabbage	Summer
Pumpkin	Summer
Citrus	Fall
Apples	Summer
Tomatoes	Spring
Corn	Fall
Berries	Fall
Pears	Summer
Melons	Fall

Ripeness

Review the 2 categories of fruits listed below.

Will continue to ripen after being picked	Pick when ripe
Apricots	Apples
Bananas	Cherries
Cantaloupe	Grapefruit
Kiwi	Grapes
Nectarines	Oranges
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Tip: To speed up the ripening of fruits such as, peaches, pears, and plums, put them in a loosely closed brown paper bag (plastic bags don't work) at room temperature. Add a banana or apple to really speed things up.

Convenience

What are the times when you choose convenience over higher cost?

When are prepackaged products a better value?

Part 3

Purchasing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables may be a new experience for some clients. Using a produce scale and understanding price per pound versus price per item may be especially challenging. Tips that you may share with clients to help them purchase fresh fruits and vegetables with their WIC Fruit and Vegetable checks include:

1. Be patient. It may take you longer to select your items. Use your WIC fruits and vegetable check when you are not rushed and have plenty of time to choose your items.
2. Look to see how the fruits and vegetables are priced. Items in the produce section are priced dollars per item or dollars per pound (lb). Dollars per pound pricing requires you to weigh your items to find the total cost.

3. Learn how to use a produce scale. Produce sections typically have several scales available for your use. Place your items on the scale and then read the dial or electrical read out. This is your total weight in pounds (abbreviated as lb). Multiply this number by the cost. Use the tool in your WIC food brochure to help you.
4. Ask for help. Produce personnel can help you select and weigh your fresh fruits and vegetables.

Part 3

Purchasing Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Review the handout "Fresh Choices for Washington WIC."

Take ten minutes to complete the following scenarios.

You are a pregnant teen purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables for the first time. You have an eight dollar fruit and vegetable check. You would like to purchase bananas and apples. You choose a bunch of bananas weighing 2¼ lbs pounds at \$.69/lb. You also select four apples that weight 2 lbs and cost \$1.66/lb.

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- Using the tool on the handout, estimate the cost of the items selected.
- Would you need to adjust your purchase? If so how?

How much did you estimate the cost of the items at?

What adjustments did you suggest?

What do you think will be the most challenging for clients when purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables?

What additional suggestions do you have about purchasing fruits and vegetables?

Part 4**Safe care and handling**

In pairs or trios, take four minutes to review the handout *“FIGHTBAC! Six steps to safer fruits and vegetables.”*

Identify what is new information for you.

Note what information you believe would be helpful for WIC clients.

We will share our observations.

Closing

Thanks for participating today. We heard some great discussion and ideas that will help us to better serve our WIC clients.

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