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## **Largest Association for Natural Products Asks Institute of Medicine to Expand Access to Vitamins for Low-Income Mothers and Children** *NPA Seeks Vitamin Inclusion in WIC Program*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The Natural Products Association today submitted comments to the Institute of Medicine advocating for expanding access to vitamins for low-income mothers and children. NPA submitted its comments as part of a Congressionally mandated study that will examine the impact of expanding the supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children (WIC) to cover certain vitamin and mineral products.

“Programs like WIC are a critical benefit for millions of families, and there’s no reason why we shouldn’t look for ways to expand the program, because every child in our community and across the country deserves the same opportunity at a healthy and successful life, regardless of income. NPA urges the Institute of Medicine to consider including multivitamin supplements under the WIC program,” said Dan Fabricant, Ph.D., Executive Director and CEO of NPA.”

The Journal of the American Medical Association recently released a [study](#) concluding that Americans in or near poverty are not improving their diets as quickly as more affluent Americans. The percentage of lower income Americans with poor diets declined from 68 percent in 2003 and 2004 to 61 percent in 2011 and 2012. For more affluent Americans, the rate declined from 50 percent to 36 percent.

NPA also requested that the period for evaluation of foods made eligible to WIC participants be made more frequent than once every 10 years. “A decade is too long to evaluate research and bring about fundamental and needed changes in the WIC program, offer newer and updated education, and expand greater options to address serious deficiencies in the population,” said Dr. Fabricant.

Expanding the WIC program to allow mothers and fathers to purchase vitamin and nutritional supplements to help their young and growing children get the nutrients they need is one way that we can do more for lower income Americans. Vitamins are proven to have many health benefits that are especially relevant to those individuals the WIC program intends to help. They can:

- Prevent classic nutrient deficiency diseases (scurvy, pellagra, and iron deficiency anemia);
- Improve appetite and growth rates in low-income children;
- Prevent neural tube birth defects;
- Protect against heart disease and stroke; and
- Build bone mass in the young.

### **Executive Summary of NPA’s Comments**

- The WIC Food Package in its current form has had success in improving a number of nutritional, pregnancy and other health outcomes but fundamental change are long overdue
- NPA recommends changes in WIC Food Packages to allow multivitamin/multimineral dietary supplement eligibility in order to target critical micronutrient deficiencies in low-income and at-risk populations.
- IOM's review frequency of WIC Food Packages, once every 10 years, does not react quickly enough to update WIC Food Packages with newer, innovative recommendations borne out of nutritional sciences
- NPA suggests an increase in the frequency of WIC Food Package reviews to improve long-term nutritional outcomes for low-income families
- While the fortification of foods with vitamins and minerals, most notably the addition of folic acid, calcium, vitamin D and iron, has demonstrated reductions in poor health outcomes such as neural tube birth defects, osteoporosis, rickets, and iron deficiency anemia, these conditions continue to be a major concern in the U.S. population, especially among low-income families
- Omega-3 fatty acid consumption in pregnant women from sources such as fish oil can enhance neural development and improve cognitive development in newborns and children, leading to lifelong benefits
- NPA recommends that IOM expand WIC Food Packages to include multivitamin/multimineral and Omega-3 fish oil dietary supplements to address the continued

NPA's comments can be viewed [here](#).

#### **Natural Products Association**

The **Natural Products Association (NPA)** is *the* trade association representing the entire natural products industry. We advocate for our members who supply, manufacture and sell natural ingredients or products for consumers. The Natural Products Association promotes good manufacturing practices as part of the growth and success of the industry. Founded in 1936, NPA represents over 1,400 members accounting for more than 10,000 locations of retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors of natural products, including foods, dietary supplements, and health/beauty aids. Visit [www.NPAinfo.org](http://www.NPAinfo.org). Follow NPA on social media:

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