



# NHS Healthy Start is changing

Information for health professionals, local authorities  
and supporting organisations.

The Healthy Start scheme helps those who are pregnant or have responsibility for at least one child under 4 years of age who are on a qualifying benefit and a low income in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Families entitled to Healthy Start can get help to buy plain, fresh, frozen, or tinned fruit and vegetables, plain cow's milk, infant formula and fresh or tinned pulses. Beneficiaries of the scheme can also get free Healthy Start vitamins for women and children. Scotland have their own scheme called Best Start Foods scheme.

The Healthy Start scheme will become a digital service and will offer an online application process which replaces the current HS01A leaflet and paper application form.

The digital scheme will introduce a prepaid card to be used for purchasing healthy food and milk, to replace the paper vouchers.

Beneficiaries of the scheme can also use their prepaid card to prove their entitlement, to collect free Healthy Start vitamins.



# This guidance explains to health professionals, local authorities and supporting organisations how:

- the scheme has changed
- what this means for applicants applying to scheme
- how you can play a vital role in promoting the digital scheme to key audiences

## **From June 2021**

For beneficiaries on the paper voucher scheme, there has been a staged invitation and transition process to the new NHS Healthy Start Scheme.

This is known as a private Beta and has provided the service with valuable feedback before opening the service to all who are eligible.

## **Early 2022**

Everyone who is eligible for NHS Healthy Start will be able to use the new digital service.

A national promotional campaign will also begin, and resources will become available for local authorities, health professionals and other supporting organisations to promote the new digital scheme.

## **March 2022**

All current beneficiaries receiving paper vouchers will need to reapply online to continue to receive their Healthy Start benefit.

For more information and resources, visit the NHS Healthy Start website:  
[www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)



# Key changes to the scheme



- ✓ **Online application**  
Paper application forms will be replaced with an online application process. Applicants can apply online at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)
- ✓ **Prepaid card**  
Paper vouchers will be replaced with a prepaid card which will be topped up with the benefit every 4 weeks.
- ✓ **Collecting Healthy Start vitamins**  
Beneficiaries of the NHS Healthy Start scheme will be able to show their prepaid card as proof of entitlement to get free Healthy Start vitamins.
- ✓ **HS01A application leaflet**  
The HS01A application leaflet will no longer be available to download or order via the Health Publications website in early 2022. All new applicants should be signposted to the online application.

- ✓ **Health professional signature**  
A health professional signature is not required and was removed from legislation and the application form in April 2020.
- ✓ **Access to more retailers**  
A beneficiary can use their prepaid card in any retailer that sells the eligible healthy start food and milk items and displays the Mastercard® acceptance mark. Retailers will no longer be required to register to accept Healthy Start vouchers.
- ✓ **Promotional materials**  
When the NHS Healthy Start digital scheme opens to new applications, new communications and marketing materials including toolkits will be made available to help promote the scheme and share on your channels.



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# What is NHS Healthy Start?

Anyone who is pregnant or families with children under 4 and in receipt of qualifying benefits may be entitled to get help to buy some basic foods and milk.

Beneficiaries of the scheme will get:

- **£4.25** each week of their pregnancy (from the 10th week of pregnancy)
- **£8.50** each week for children from birth to 1 year old
- **£4.25** each week for children between 1 and 4 years old

The payments will stop on the child's 4th birthday or if they no longer receive the qualifying benefits.

They can also get free Healthy Start vitamins.

This benefit helps families to buy certain types of milk, infant formula, fruit and vegetables

## Fruit and vegetables

- fresh or frozen or tinned
- fresh, dried or tinned pulses
- whole or chopped
- packaged or loose
- fruit in fruit juice, or fruit or vegetables in water

## Plain cow's milk

This needs to be plain cow's milk, which is pasteurised, sterilised, long-life or ultra-heat treated (UHT).

## Infant formula

- stage one only (first infant formula)
- made from cow's milk
- nutritionally complete

It cannot be follow-on formula or milk ('from 6 months', or 'from 6 to 12 months').



## Who can apply?

To qualify for the NHS Healthy Start scheme, an applicant must be at least 10 weeks pregnant or has at least one child under 4 years old.

In addition, they must be receiving any of the following:

- Child Tax Credit (only if the family's annual income is £16,190 or less)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Pension Credit (which includes the child addition)
- Universal Credit (only if the family's take-home pay is £408 or less per month from employment)

They may also be eligible for NHS Healthy Start if:

- they're under 18 and pregnant, even if they're are not claiming any benefits
- they claim income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and are over 10 weeks pregnant
- they or their partner get Working Tax Credit run-on only. (Working Tax Credit run-on is the Working Tax Credit they receive in the 4 weeks immediately after they have stopped working for 16 hours or more per week)

### No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) application criteria

In June 2021, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) agreed to temporarily extend the Healthy Start scheme to British children (aged under 4), whose parent or guardian meets the financial eligibility criteria and are excluded from claiming public funds as a consequence of their immigration status, or their lack of immigration status.

- To qualify for the temporary extension, applicants must meet all of the following criteria:
- have a child, or more than one child, who is aged under 4;
- their families take-home pay is less than £408 per month
- they are excluded from claiming public funds as a consequence of their immigration status or their lack of immigration status

If the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and would like to apply, they should email [Healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:Healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk) and DHSC will contact them to discuss the application process.

# The application process

- Existing beneficiaries of the paper voucher scheme and new applicants to the NHS Healthy Start scheme are required to apply online at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) to join the digital scheme.
- If an applicant cannot apply online, they may apply over the telephone by contacting the NHS Healthy Start helpline on **0300 330 7010**
- A telephone translation service is also available.
- The NHS Healthy Start helpline is available **Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm**. An automated service is available 24 hours a day to activate the prepaid card or report the card as lost or stolen.
- The online application process enables someone to apply on the applicant's behalf, however the claimant must be present during the application process to confirm their personal information and accept the prepaid card terms and conditions.
- An applicant will no longer be able to apply for NHS Healthy Start using a paper application form.

## The beneficiary journey



Applies at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) or applies by telephone



Completes the online process and is successful



Receives the prepaid card in the post



Activates the prepaid card and receives PIN



Uses the prepaid card in most retailers that sell the eligible healthy food and milk items and displays the Mastercard® acceptance mark

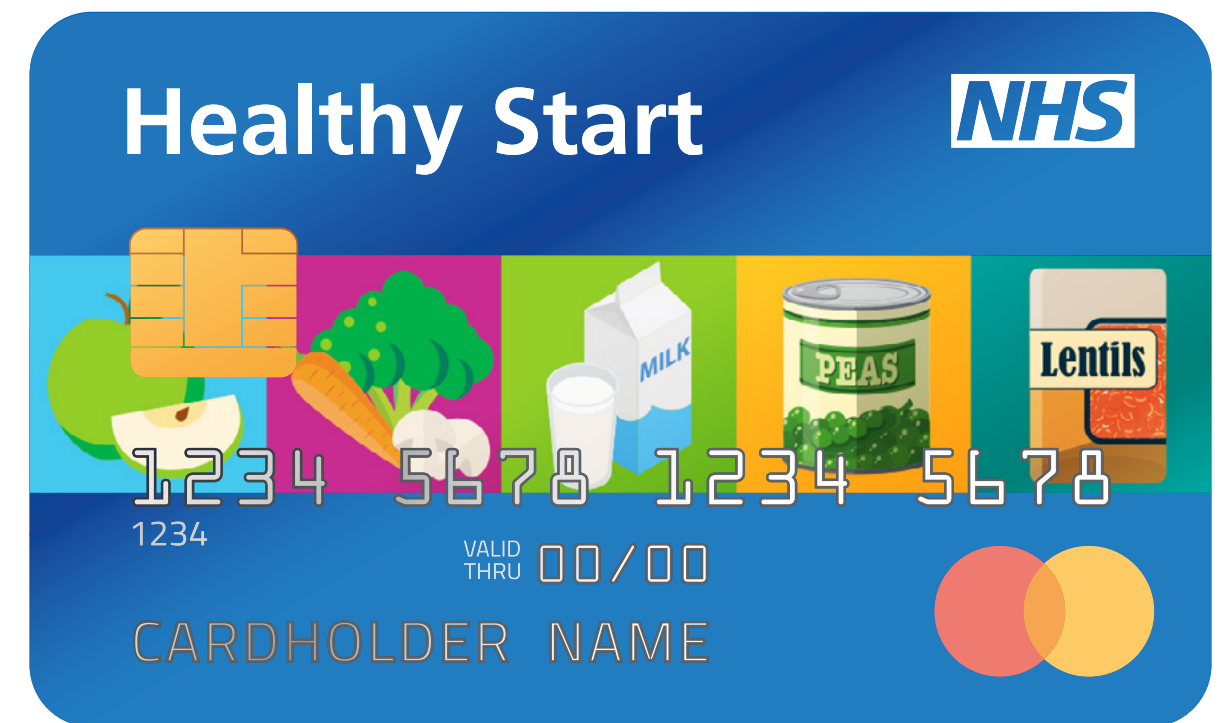


Uses the prepaid card as proof of eligibility to collect free Healthy Start vitamins



# The prepaid card

- Once a beneficiary has received their NHS Healthy Start prepaid card, it must be activated before being used.
- The prepaid card can be used in most retail stores that sell the eligible healthy food items and displays the Mastercard® acceptance mark.
- The prepaid card is issued in the beneficiary's name and can only be used by that person. Only one card can be issued to a claiming household.
- Retailers do not need to be registered to the Healthy Start scheme and beneficiaries do not need to identify themselves to a retailer as an NHS Healthy Start recipient.
- A retailer is also not required to check a beneficiary's purchases.
- If a beneficiary loses their card or it is stolen, they must call the helpline immediately so the card can be stopped. Failure to do so may result in any funds on the card being lost.
- A beneficiary can request a new prepaid card by contacting the helpline. They will be sent a new card in the post within 7 working days.
- A beneficiary may check the balance on their card at an ATM or by calling **0300 330 7010**



# Healthy Start Vitamins

Beneficiaries of the NHS Healthy Start scheme will also be entitled to collect free Healthy Start vitamins.

Healthy Start vitamins are available to those who are pregnant, new mothers, and children under the age of 4 and can be collected every 8 weeks from a registered distributor.

The Healthy Start vitamins contain the exact amount of vitamins recommended by the Government to be taken as vitamin supplements and contain vitamins A, C and D for children aged from birth to four years, and folic acid and vitamins C and D for pregnant and breastfeeding women. The Healthy Start vitamins are vegetarian and Halal certified.

There are two Healthy Start branded products available.



## Healthy Start children's vitamins drops

The daily dose of 5 drops contains:

- 233 micrograms of vitamin A
- 20 milligrams of vitamin C
- 10 micrograms of vitamin D3

Children who are having 500ml or more of formula a day do not need Healthy Start vitamins.

The vitamins are suitable for vegetarians and free from milk, egg, gluten, soya and peanut residues, and have a shelf life of 15 months from manufacture. Beneficiaries are entitled to 1 bottle of children's drops every 8 weeks.

## Healthy Start vitamins for women

The daily dose is 1 tablet, which contains:

- 70 milligrams of vitamin C
- 10 micrograms of vitamin D
- 400 micrograms of folic acid

Women's vitamins are suitable for vegetarians and free from wheat, fish, egg and salt. No colours, flavours or preservatives.

No gluten containing ingredients.

The shelf life is 2 years from manufacture. Beneficiaries are entitled to 1 bottle of tablets every 8 weeks.

# Collecting Healthy Start Vitamins

Once a beneficiary has successfully applied to the new digital NHS Healthy Start scheme, they will receive a prepaid card instead of their food and vitamins vouchers.

To collect their free Healthy Start vitamins, they will need to present their NHS Healthy Start prepaid card as evidence of their entitlement, as vouchers will no longer be used. No payment is taken from the card.

## The process for vitamin distributors in England and Wales



The prepaid card will be used as evidence that the beneficiary is part of the NHS Healthy Start scheme and can collect vitamins. Vitamin distributors may ask to see a person's NHS Healthy Start prepaid card as evidence of entitlement and ask for proof of the children's age.

### How will I know how much someone is entitled to?

It is the responsibility of any organisation distributing vitamins in England and Wales to ask the person how many vitamins they might need and provide that amount.

### How vitamin distributors can make a claim

The reimbursement process is not changing and a claim will still need to be submitted each quarter. The only change to the process is that the vitamin voucher is no longer issued. Old vouchers can be redeemed until the expiry date shown. We do not need you to share any evidence of the card being present as part of the reimbursement process for vitamins or provide vouchers with a claim.

You should never record any information relating to the person's prepaid card such as the card number or 'CVV' number.

It is the responsibility of local authorities and any other distributors of vitamins to work out how these changes will affect their own process in advance of the delivery of the new scheme.

If you would like to discuss your proposed changes to your vitamins distribution process, email us at [nhsbsa.healthystartdigital@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.healthystartdigital@nhs.net)

## The process for vitamin distributors in Northern Ireland

Beneficiaries who reside in Northern Ireland will receive a one-off letter advising which vitamins they are entitled to. The beneficiary will contact the Business Services Organisation (BSO) in Northern Ireland when they need vitamins and the BSO will check their entitlement. The vitamins will then be posted out to the beneficiary.

# Promotion and Campaigning

Healthcare professionals, local authorities and supporting organisations play a key role in promoting the NHS Healthy Start scheme.

## Access to promotional materials

There will be a range of promotional materials available to download and use on your channels at: <https://media.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/>

These materials will include, but is not limited to:

- Social media toolkit, content and graphics
- Editable posters
- Videos and animations
- Leaflets including Easy-Read
- Digital GP screen designs
- Banner designs
- Guidance documents
- Welsh language materials

## Modifying the communications materials

Supporting organisations may add their organisation logo to some of the communications materials. There will be some communications materials available which will have a clear space for organisations to add their logos and other information. The NHS logo must not be removed from any of the materials and should be placed to the top right. The supporting organisations logo should be placed along the bottom of the page. The visual style should follow the NHS Identity guidelines. If a supporting organisation logo is added to materials, you must ensure the NHS logo is also included.

## Creating your own NHS Healthy Start promotional materials

All non-NHS organisations must have all promotional materials approved by the NHSBSA before distributing.

The letters 'NHS' and the NHS logo are protected by law. They are UK trademarks owned by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and may not be produced without permission.

If you can not use the materials provided and wish to create your own, please contact the NHSBSA communications and marketing team at: [nhsbsa.communicationsteam.nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.communicationsteam.nhs.net)

## Social media

There are two NHS Healthy Start scheme social media accounts, Facebook and Twitter. These are verified accounts and will be a source of information for beneficiaries and stakeholders to be updated about the NHS Healthy Start scheme.

There will be regular posts and social media activities on both channels which we encourage all supporting organisations to share on their own social media channels.

Follow us by searching **@NHSHealthyStart**



# Important contacts

Visit our website: [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

Contact us by telephone: **0300 330 7010\***

Customer service email address: [healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)

To contact the NHS Healthy Start team: [nhsbsa.healthystartdigital@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.healthystartdigital@nhs.net)

For any media enquiries: [nhsbsa.communicationsteam@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.communicationsteam@nhs.net)

Follow us on social media: [www.facebook.com/nhshealthystart](https://www.facebook.com/nhshealthystart) & [www.twitter.com/nhshealthystart](https://www.twitter.com/nhshealthystart)



\* Calls to 0300 numbers are charged at the same rate as dialling an 01 or 02 number. If your landline or mobile service has inclusive minutes to 01 / 02 numbers, then calls to 0300 are counted as part of this inclusive call volume

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