



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




## INFORMATION SHEET ON HEALTHY START

### What is the Healthy Start Scheme?

Healthy Start is a UK-wide statutory scheme which provides nutritional support through vouchers and vitamin supplements to pregnant women and children under-4 years of age in low-income families. The Scheme supports around 14,000 households in Northern Ireland.

The Scheme's website [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) provides advice on a range of issues including healthy eating and staying active for beneficiaries; advice for HSC professionals including resources and FAQs; where to find a local retailer to redeem the vouchers and how the vitamins are distributed in NI.

### Who is eligible for Healthy Start?

Healthy Start is open to women who are at least 10 weeks pregnant and families with children under the age of four and who are in receipt of certain benefits (e.g. Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Child Tax Credit). All pregnant women under the age of 18 qualify - whether or not they are on benefits.

### Applying for the Healthy Start Scheme and the role of HSC professionals

Anyone who thinks they are eligible should apply. Health and Social Care professionals are asked to encourage women to apply for Healthy Start. The Scheme is a tool for those working in HSC to help identify pregnant women and families who may need extra help and to have a healthier lifestyle.

Beneficiaries need to fill in an application form to join the Healthy Start Scheme. You can advise beneficiaries that the scheme can be applied for on-line at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk/](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/) or beneficiaries can phone the Healthy Start helpline **0845 607 6823** and ask for an application form. Stocks of Healthy Start resources (application forms, posters, leaflets etc) can be ordered for FREE by calling the Health Professionals DH Order line on 0300 123 1002 or using the Text phone on 0300 123 1003. This is a UK Order line and open to HSC professionals in Northern Ireland to order Healthy Start resources.

You can view the full range of Healthy Start resources available, download them and learn about how you can order copies from the Order line by visiting [www.healthystart.nhs.uk/for-health-professionals/healthy-start-resources](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/for-health-professionals/healthy-start-resources).

Your role is **not** to check applicants are getting the qualifying benefits they claim to be getting. Those administrating the Scheme will do this.

A health professional (usually midwife or health visitor) will also need to sign Part B of the application form, confirming that the woman is pregnant and/or the names and ages of her children.

### **Vouchers**

The value of the voucher is £3.10 and can be exchanged for milk, infant formula, fresh and frozen plain fruit and vegetables. Pregnant women and children aged between one and four will each receive one voucher per week. Babies under one year old will receive two vouchers per week. The vouchers are posted out every 4 weeks.

### **Healthy Start vitamins**

Beneficiaries of Healthy Start vouchers can also get free vitamin supplements. The free Healthy Start branded vitamin drop supplements are available for **children** from 6 months until their 4th birthday, and Healthy Start vitamin tablet supplements are available for **pregnant women who are at least 10 weeks pregnant and women with babies up to one year old**. Healthy Start women's tablets contain folic acid, vitamins C and D. Healthy Start children's drops contain vitamins A, C and D. For more information about the Healthy Start vitamins go to

<http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/healthy-start-vitamins/>

There is no separate application form to complete for the vitamins. The green vitamin coupon is automatically issued to those eligible women and children every 8 weeks; the vitamin coupon is attached to the Healthy Start letter. There will be one coupon for each person entitled to the vitamins which will clearly indicate which supplement (drops or tablets) they are entitled to.

Healthy Start vitamins are not available on prescription; they are only available to beneficiaries of the Healthy Start Scheme and are not available for sale to non-beneficiaries in NI. Healthy Start vitamins are not available at pharmacies in NI at present.

The interim arrangement currently in place for distribution of the vitamins throughout Northern Ireland is detailed below:

The Business Services Organisation (BSO) purchases the Healthy Start vitamins on a regional basis on behalf of DHSSPS and the HSC, for onward postal distribution directly to beneficiaries. HSC professionals should advise beneficiaries to post the Healthy Start letter still attached/ or along with the vitamin coupon to:

<p>BSO (Business Services Organisation) Healthy Start Vitamins Team Pinewood Villa 73 Loughgall Road Armagh BT61 7PR</p>
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Beneficiaries should not cut out their vitamin coupon. We need the coupon still attached to the Healthy Start letter because it includes the beneficiary's address and proof of issue.

On receipt of each letter enclosing the coupon to claim the vitamins, the Healthy Start vitamins will be posted directly to the beneficiary.

### **Information Update Distribution**

Please share this Healthy Start Information with colleagues. If you wish to receive Healthy Start updates directly or your contact details change, please notify us by emailing your contact details, to [phdadmin@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:phdadmin@dhsspsni.gov.uk) putting 'Healthy Start Information Update' in the subject header.