



# *Eastbourne Food Partnership Toolkit*

## **NHS Healthy Start Scheme**

### ***What is NHS Healthy Start?***

The NHS Healthy Start Scheme supports pregnant women and families with young children to access healthy food items. It is available to all women under the age of 18 (regardless of their income), and is means-tested for women aged 18 and over who are 10+ weeks pregnant, and for families with a child under the age of 4.

The full list of the NHS Healthy Start income criteria can be found at:

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

NHS Healthy Start enables participants to receive free vitamins and a prepaid card that can be spent on fruit, vegetables, pulses and milk in any outlet that accepts mastercard. The amount available is as follows.

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

If a participant remains eligible from 10 weeks pregnant until their child is age 4, the scheme can provide approx. £1,200 towards the purchase of healthy items.

NHS Healthy Start vitamins come as an 8-week supply of 56 tablets (a daily dose of 1 tablet) and 280 drops (a daily dose of 5 drops). The distribution points are available here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-health-services/healthy-start-vitamins>

### ***Why does it matter?***

The NHS Healthy Start Scheme is a lifeline for so many pregnant women and families with young children, enabling them to buy healthy food such as fruit, vegetables, pulses and milk as well as vitamins. Not only does the Food Foundation's Food Insecurity Tracker show that households with children are more likely to experience food insecurity, it also shows that households experiencing food insecurity are more likely to cut back on fruit and veg purchases. Healthy Start provides a top-up to enable pregnant women and families with young children to prioritise healthy items in their weekly shop.

However, in Eastbourne, only 67% of those eligible are currently accessing the scheme (as of July 2023). We all have a role to play to raise awareness for Healthy Start, support those eligible to sign up to the scheme and help people to make the most out of their NHS Healthy Start allowance.

For more info, see [this 15 minute training video](#) put together by East Sussex Public Health

*Direct any questions to [info@eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk](mailto:info@eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk)*

*This document was produced by Nancy Wilson on behalf of Eastbourne Food Partnership, September 2023*



## What can you do to promote the scheme?

- **[all]** Ensure that key team members are briefed about NHS Healthy Start. You can watch the short training video prepared by East Sussex Public Health available [here](#)
- **[all]** Raise awareness of the scheme through the comms materials below and
- **[affordable food clubs/community fridges]** Ensure that your project can accept NHS Healthy Start payments by using a card reader. Members can then be given a choice of how much of their shop to be covered by NHS Healthy Start (e.g. 50% for 50% eligible items). If you need support to get a card reader you can get in touch with Eastbourne Food Partnership at [info@eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk](mailto:info@eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk)
- **[retailers]** Consider initiatives to make the most out of NHS Healthy Start, whether by providing 'top up' vouchers, discounts on NHS Healthy Start eligible items or NHS Healthy Start boxes. See the [recent research](#) that shows that Sainsbury's £2 Healthy Start top-up vouchers for fruit and veg was an effective way of increasing fruit & veg purchases by low-income households
- **[retailers]** Be aware that retailers are not responsible for checking what people buy with their card. It's the responsibility of the person using the card.

## Communications Materials

A range of promotional materials are available via [this website](#). Please be aware when promoting the NHS Healthy Start guide of the following [Guidance for promoting NHS Healthy Start document](#).

### Short text (for newsletters, websites, social media etc)

#### Get help towards the cost of fruit, vegetables, pulses and milk

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be eligible for the [NHS Healthy Start scheme](#). You can apply for a prepaid card to use towards the cost of fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk and vitamins in any shop that sells eligible items and takes mastercard payments

Your card gets automatically topped up every 4 weeks and you can check your balance at any cash machine.

To find out more, check if you're eligible and apply at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) and follow NHS Healthy Start on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#). You can also find out in as little as 5 minutes if you're eligible by clicking here: <https://endchildfoodpoverty.org/healthy-start>

For support with applications, you can visit [[X community centre e.g. Willingdon Trees, Tech Resort...](#)] or call 0300 330 7010 (please be aware that this phone line will charge).

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## Other Resources

- Find a range of resources in other languages [here](#)
- See the answers to Frequently Asked Questions [here](#). Sample below:

### Can I use my Healthy Start card for online shopping?

No. However, the Healthy Start card can be used in any shop that sells healthy food and milk and accepts Mastercard®.

### Can I use my Healthy Start card to withdraw money from an ATM or request cashback?

No, the card can only be used in store. You cannot purchase more than the balance on your card. You can check your balance at an ATM or by calling us on 0300 330 7010.

### Can those excluded from claiming public funds apply for Healthy Start?

You might be able to get Healthy Start vouchers depending on your immigration status.

You can get Healthy Start vouchers if all the following are true:

- you have at least 1 British child under 4 years old – [check if your child is automatically a British citizen \(opens in a new tab\)](#) if you're not sure
- your family earns £408 or less per month after tax
- you cannot claim 'public funds' ([opens in a new tab](#)) (for example, benefits) – either because of your immigration status or because you do not have an immigration status

Your biometric residence permit (BRP) or your [online immigration status \(opens in a new tab\)](#) will say if you cannot claim public funds. You might also have a letter from the Home Office about it.

To get Healthy Start vouchers, ask for an application form via email. Only use this email address if you think you cannot claim public funds because of your immigration status.

[Healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:Healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk)

## Top tips you may not find on the NHS Website

- Any money on the Healthy Start card that is 16 weeks old will expire and money that is less than 16 weeks will remain on the payment card.
- Families claiming for an unborn child will need to notify Healthy Start and DWP that the child has been born, to allow them to continue receiving the Healthy Start payments. Apparently if they are not notified, they stop receiving their Healthy Start money.
- Healthy Start payment cards cannot be used to purchase food/drink alternatives where children have allergies / intolerances. No exceptions can be made e.g. no exceptions where a child is intolerant to cow's milk – instead beneficiaries in receipt of Healthy Start can use Healthy Start to purchase extra fruit and vegetables if they are unable to drink cow's milk or infant formula.

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