

## Healthy Start Scheme and Covid-19

### Healthy Start food vouchers

#### **What is the Government doing to support Healthy Start beneficiaries who are struggling to obtain infant formula?**

The Department of Health and Social Care is aware of some recent local food stockpiling issues and is in discussion with the industry to ensure a continued supply of infant formula is available. Additionally, the British Specialist Nutrition Association Ltd who represent manufacturers of formula, have put out a note of reassurance to parents on both their website and via Twitter to allay concerns and to ask people to be considerate in the way they shop to ensure an adequate supply of formula remains available to all. This dialogue with the formula industry will remain active and we will continue to monitor the situation.

The Healthy Start helpline is also reminding people who wish to use their Healthy Start vouchers to purchase infant formula that they can use them in smaller local shops and pharmacies which are registered with the scheme, as well as in large supermarkets.

#### **Why can't Healthy Start vouchers be used for online shopping?**

Healthy Start vouchers must be used with retailers who are registered with the Healthy Start scheme. There are over 21,000 retail outlets registered with the Healthy Start scheme across the UK, including many independent local shops and pharmacies.

#### **Why can't Healthy Start vouchers be issued automatically during the Covid-19 pandemic, without people having to apply?**

Healthy Start is a statutory scheme and vouchers can only be issued on the receipt of a completed application. People are not automatically enrolled but they are invited to apply - all families who are eligible for the scheme are sent a pre-populated application form. The application form is also available on the Healthy Start website [www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/how-to-apply/online-application-form/](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/how-to-apply/online-application-form/). We have explored automatic enrolment as part of our work on the digitisation of the scheme, but some families have indicated that automatic enrolment would not work for them where they do not wish to participate in the scheme.

### **Will the value of the Healthy Start voucher increase during the pandemic?**

The Government has no current plans to increase the value of the Healthy Start voucher, but the voucher value is kept under continuous review.

### **Healthy Start vitamins**

Healthy Start Vitamins are part of the Healthy Start Scheme. They are available in tubs of tablets for pregnant women and bottles of drops for children, and each tub/bottle contains eight weeks' supply of vitamins. They are ordered by your organisation from NHS Supply Chain.

Further information about Healthy Start Vitamins can be found on the Healthy Start website, [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk) and guidance on vitamin intake and supplementation can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/>

### **Where can beneficiaries get Healthy Start vitamins?**

There is a statutory responsibility placed on Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities to ensure that Healthy Start Vitamins are made available free to Healthy Start beneficiaries. However, the means by which they are made available is for local areas to determine. Some local areas distribute them through clinics such as child health clinics and antenatal clinics, and through children's centres. Other areas have arrangements for distribution through pharmacies and others distribute through midwives and health visitors.

The current situation we all face will inevitably have an impact on how Healthy Start Vitamins are distributed in almost all local areas. However, we do not wish to advise local areas to do anything which contravenes current general guidance to the public on vitamin supplementation. We also do not wish to advise local areas to use other vitamin products as these will inevitably be more expensive than our own Healthy Start product and they may not be suitable in any event.

### **Is the NHS Supply Chain able to distribute Healthy Start vitamins?**

Both supplies and delivery of our product are still going ahead unchanged – there are plenty of supplies in stock and can be ordered in the usual way from NHS Supply Chain.

We therefore concluded that the best way forward was to ask local areas to make any changes they can to their own local distribution arrangements to take account of the current restrictions.

### **Will information be shared on the Healthy Start website?**

Updates have been made to the Healthy Start website to reflect the information above.

We are also advising beneficiaries “If you use Healthy Start Vitamins, or you are a new users who wishes to pick up your supply, please contact you usual distribution outlet to see if there have been any changes to the way vitamins are currently being distributed in your local area.”

The information can be found on the pages listed below:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthy-start-vouchers/healthy-start-vitamins/>  
<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/for-health-professionals/vitamins/>

### **Completing the HS01A (**

#### **Can the HS01A be submitted without a signature from a health care professional?**

Regulations were laid before Parliament on 19 March which makes provision for, among other things, the digitisation of the Healthy Start scheme. These regulations are due to come into force on 6 April. When the regulations do come into force, a health professional signature will no longer be required on the HS01A.

We will clarify this position on the Healthy Start website once the regulations are in force. In the meantime, HSIU are advising individual applicants who are struggling to obtain a health professional signature on their application form to send it in anyway although, for legal reasons, this cannot be processed until the regulations come into force.

We kindly ask that this message is not shared widely at this time, so to allow for the regulations to come into force, at which point we will communicate this change to prospective beneficiaries via the Healthy Start website.

### **Healthy Start Vitamin Returns**

#### **Do I need to collect the Healthy Start Vitamin vouchers in order to complete the quarterly returns?**

We do not require the paper vouchers, however you must ensure that you keep a record of the Healthy Start vitamins that you have provided to beneficiaries in order to complete the return form.

#### **How can we sign the Healthy Start vitamin return form without access to a scanner or printer?**

The Healthy Start vitamin return form that you submit each quarter has the functionality to accept a digital signature on the PDF. However, if you are unable to open the PDF because your PC does not have adobe reader, email [NHSBSA.healthystart@nhs.net](mailto:NHSBSA.healthystart@nhs.net) and request an excel version where you can take a picture of your signature and supply this as an image on the return form.

**I am unable to complete the Healthy Start vitamin return form, can you extend the deadline?**

We are unable to extend the cut off for each quarter; however, there is no time limit to prevent you from submitting your Healthy Start vitamin return later in the year. We can process your return form during any quarter.

The quarterly return dates can be found below:

<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Cut off</b>
Q4 2019 -2020	30 April 2020
Q1 2020 – 2021	30 July 2020
Q2 2020 – 2021	31 October 2020
Q3 2020 - 2021	31 January 2021
Q4 2020 – 2021	30 April 2021