

The Sheffield Extended Healthy Start Scheme – A vision of a “Rickets Free Sheffield”

An update on Vitamin D

In July 2016, SACN (Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition) and Public Health England updated their [advice](#) on the supplementation of Vitamin D. It is now recommended those patients at risk take a supplement all year round and those not at risk take a supplement during the autumn and winter months to help prevent Vitamin D deficiency. This should be alongside safe sun exposure and dietary intake.

So, what is the Healthy Start Scheme?

The Healthy Start Scheme is a national scheme providing certain eligible groups with free vitamins. These are ‘Healthy Start Vitamins for Children’ containing Vitamin A, C and D and ‘Healthy Start Vitamins for Women’ containing Folic Acid, Vitamin D and Vitamin C. Please note that ‘Healthy Start for Women’ contain the standard 400mcg dose of folic acid and although this is appropriate for most preconception care please consider those at [higher risk](#) who will need additional supplementation. These vitamins are essential for a number of bodily processes including healthy bone growth and supplementation ensures that children are provided with the best possible start in life.

So, who is eligible under the National Scheme?

Those currently eligible on the national scheme include those who are pregnant women with a child under 12 months and children aged from six months to four years who are receiving Healthy Start benefits are entitled to free Healthy Start vitamins. All pregnant mums under the age of 18 also qualify. For further information see the [Healthy Start Website](#).

What is happening in Sheffield?

In Sheffield, we encourage self-care and recommend patients to purchase low-cost supplements from their local supermarkets or pharmacy, or if they are eligible via the national scheme. **We discourage the prescribing of maintenance dose Vitamin D.** However, certain eligible groups of patients will be able to have access to free Healthy Start Vitamins available from their local [Family Centre](#).

So, who is eligible?

A number of groups are eligible to get **free** Healthy Start Vitamins including:

- Preconception – GP’s can signpost patients enquiring about trying to start for a family using a [templated letter](#)
- Pregnant women – GP’s can signpost women using a [templated letter](#). However, all those living within the Sheffield area will be supplied with ‘Healthy Start Vitamins for Women’ via the Jessop Wing on antenatal appointments.
- Breastfeeding mothers – The Jessop Wing will provide a free two month supply upon discharge.
- Breastfed babies – Babies will be supplied with a free two month supply upon their first visit with the Health Visitor
- Bottles fed babies – Once babies are on less than 500mL (roughly at weaning stage) of infant formula they will receive a free two month supply (Note: Infant formula is fortified with Vitamin D)
- Children at increased risk of Vitamin D deficiency – These will be highlighted in their red book with a sunshine sticker. Similarly, GP’s identifying patients at increased risk can use a [templated letter](#) to highlight these patients. Parents can take either the letter or their red book to their local family centre and the child will receive free vitamins up until their fourth birthday.

