



Healthy Start Vitamins:

New Product Factsheet

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have recently procured new versions of Healthy Start Vitamins products for women and children. This factsheet has been designed to introduce the new products.

The new products will be available for sale from April 2019 onwards. However, NHS Supply Chain will be using the existing stocks of the old product first. There will be a period of time after April 2019 when both the old and new products are likely to be in circulation.

Local areas should use up existing stocks of Healthy Start Vitamins products they hold before moving on to supply the new product.

What are Healthy Start Vitamins?

The Healthy Start Scheme provides help to pregnant women, new mothers and children under the age of four who are from a low income family, in order to encourage a healthy diet.

More information about the Healthy Start Scheme is on the Healthy Start website:-

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Those who are a beneficiary of the Healthy Start scheme can also receive free supplies of vitamin supplements. These are tablets for pregnant women and new mothers, and vitamin drops for children. People on the Healthy Start scheme receive a vitamins voucher every eight weeks which can be exchanged for the free Healthy Start Vitamins product suitable for their needs.

DHSC arranges for the vitamin products to be manufactured. Supplies are then bought by local authorities and the NHS, to be given out locally in places like clinics, children's centres and pharmacies. In some areas midwives and health visitors also hand out supplies of the vitamins.

Why are Healthy Start Vitamins important?

Healthy Start Vitamins can help to ensure that pregnant women, new mothers and children from a low income family get the vitamins they need to keep healthy.

They contain exactly the amount of vitamins recommended by the Government to be taken as vitamin supplements. They are easy to use and should be taken every day.

Why is DHSC introducing new products?

DHSC holds contracts with private vitamins companies to make these products, and from time to time these contracts expire and need to be renewed. Therefore DHSC has taken the opportunity to see if any changes can be made to improve the products.

What changes have been made to Healthy Start Vitamins for Women?

The women's tablets will be in a larger tub. This tub should be more visually appealing. All the necessary information about the product appears on a single label, rather than the "multi-fold" label which was a feature of the old tub.

However, this is the only change to the women's vitamins product. The formulation of the women's tablets has not changed, there are still 56 tablets – eight weeks' supply – in a tub, with one tablet to be taken each day for maximum effectiveness. They are still classed as a food supplement, and can be stored and distributed in the same way as the existing product. The shelf life of the product is still two years.



What changes have been made to Healthy Start Vitamins for Children?

There have been some key changes to the children's vitamins product.

The product is still offered in the form of drops, with a daily dose of 5 drops per day – and should still be used on a daily basis for maximum effectiveness.

The drops are still supplied in a 10ml bottle containing eight weeks' supply – but the new product is supplied in a slightly larger carton, and the colour of some of the text on the carton may be different. The shelf life is still ten months.

The formulation of this product has changed. Each daily dose of 5 drops now contains 10 microgrammes of vitamin D in line with Government recommendations, rather than 7.5 microgrammes.

This new product is a food supplement not a medicine like the current product. This means that it can be stored, distributed and disposed of in the same way as the women's product. There is no need to follow the special rules needed for the storage and disposal of medicines. There will also be no need to hold a Wholesale Dealer's Licence in order to store the product at any centralised storage point in your area and then distribute it to other outlets.

The product can be used from birth – but only for breastfed babies. Formula-fed babies do not need these vitamin drops until they are consuming less than 500ml of formula per day. This is because formula is already fortified with vitamins.

What about any overdose risk to very young babies, if the new children's product can be used from birth?

There is no danger of these drops providing dangerously high levels of vitamin A and vitamin D to very young babies – but the dose of five drops a day should not be exceeded.

Why is the new children's product a food supplement not a medicine? Does this mean a reduction in safety/quality?

DHSC is aware that the current product's classification can cause problems for local areas who wish to hold central stocks, and it can also cause confusion among healthcare professionals and other staff about who can distribute the products. DHSC took advice from a number of expert sources, including the MHRA and the Food Standards Agency, and all agreed that the nature of this product meant that it was better categorised as a food supplement rather than a medicine.

However, the new product, whilst a food supplement, has been extensively tested and is manufactured to the same standards as pharmaceutical products.