

A healthy lifestyle

It's never too early

What happens to children before they are born and in their early years can affect their health and life opportunities later on. For example, babies that are breastfed have less chance of getting infections or of becoming obese and therefore developing diabetes and other illnesses as they get older. Those who grow up in a caring and safe environment and have a healthy relationship with their parents/ carers are more likely to do better at school and as they go through life.

If we know how to prevent illness, and encourage healthy behaviour from pregnancy onwards, our children stand a great chance of having a healthy life.

Vitamins are essential nutrients that your body needs in small amounts so that it can work properly. Even though you can get lots of vitamins from a healthy balanced diet, you still might not get everything you need at certain times in your life - such as when you're pregnant, a new mum or a small child. Ask your health visitor about the free Healthy Start vitamin vouchers (see box on opposite page).

If you don't already live a healthy lifestyle, now is a great time to start. Sign up and register to Change4Life for lots of handy healthy eating and exercise tips for you and your child.
www.nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx

Healthy Start

free fruit, vegetables and vitamins

Healthy Start is a government scheme for pregnant women or women with children between the ages of 1-4. Women receive vouchers every week to support a healthy diet if they are receiving income support or other related benefits. The value of the vouchers depends on the number and age of the children. The vouchers can be used to purchase, plain cow's milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables (with no added ingredients), whole or chopped, packaged or loose.

Parents can obtain healthy start vitamins at health visitor clinics and at St John's Health Centre and Brighthouse Health Centre and from their health visitor. If a family is eligible for Healthy Start vitamins then they are given free and if not, they have the option to buy these from their health visitor. The vitamins supplied for mums are in tablets and the vitamins for babies and children are drops.

As well as giving your baby a healthy start, you can help support them in early experiences and discovering the world around them. During the early months, babies explore and learn using their feet as well as their hands to feel textures and form. Leave their socks and shoes off when you can.

It's also important to spend one-to-one time, giving them your complete attention, without any distractions like the TV or mobile phone.

Smoking during pregnancy can cause problems for your baby. If you are pregnant the best start you can give your child is to quit smoking.

Start4Life Healthy tips www.nhs.uk/start4life

A healthy family

Being a healthy weight, not smoking, eating well and looking after yourself is the best example your child needs. Use these tips to help the whole family live a healthier lifestyle:

1. **Eat at the table together.**
2. **Include children in family activities** such as walking the dog or washing the car.
3. **Ban 'sweetened' drinks** from the home.
4. **Make sure the whole family eats breakfast every day.**
5. **Cut down on screen time** such as TV, digital devices and mobiles and do more physical activity.
6. **Prepare more meals at home** - it takes a little longer - but this way you can control what you put in food.
7. **Have healthier takeaways** - you don't have to give up takeaways, just make smarter choices. Have mushy peas with your fish and chips and don't eat all the batter around the fish or order lower-fat pizza toppings like vegetables.
8. **Avoid over-sized portions** - opt for 'me sized meals' for children by using child-sized plates.
9. **If you feel ready to make changes** for a healthier lifestyle and you have a body mass index of 27.5 or above www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx the Better Living Team in Calderdale can help you and your family create a healthier lifestyle, including tips for healthy recipes. Call 01422 230230

www.nhs.uk/Livewell

1

Should I give my baby sweet things to eat and drink, she loves fruit squash?

2

Drinks with added sugar are particularly bad for babies' teeth - it's like giving a baby a lolly to suck on all day. Giving your baby a 'sweet tooth' also means that they are more likely to keep pestering and crying for sugary things.

3

It's much easier to get your baby on the right track now than to try and change what they eat later.