

Health in Pregnancy Grant Podcast - Transcript

James From April 2009, pregnant women will get a one-off payment of £190, as long as they receive health advice from a health professional. I'm James Hartigan, and with me today is Gemma, a mum-to-be, to discuss the new Health in Pregnancy Grant. She'll be asking Elaine Graham from HM Revenue & Customs and Juliet Albert, who's a midwife, about how it'll work for pregnant women. Well, first of all, Gemma, congratulations.

Gemma Thank you very much.

James Do you want to start with some questions for Elaine?

Gemma Yeah, sure. So, it's obviously a £190 grant – what is the money actually for? What am I supposed to spend it on?

Elaine Well Gemma, the grant is all about providing flexible help for mums-to-be. The last weeks of pregnancy are a very expensive time for women – we recognise that. And basically, you can spend this money on whatever you like: cots, nappies, baby baths, whatever. Everybody is different, everybody's circumstances are different, and therefore everyone will need to spend the cash in a different way. It's entirely up to you how you decide to spend it.

Gemma So, this isn't monitored in any way? You can get the money and you've got free rein on what you want to spend it on?

Elaine Absolutely. This is all about flexibility. Everybody is different, and this gives you the choice to what you want to spend the money on.

Gemma And who's entitled to the money – is it every pregnant woman?

Elaine Every pregnant woman is entitled to it. It's not means-tested and it's available to everybody. You have to be a resident in the UK, and also it does depend on your immigration status.

Gemma At what stage of the pregnancy can I claim the money?

Elaine Well, the grant actually starts to be paid from the 6 April 2009, but you can actually start to claim – women who've reached their 25th week – from January.

Gemma Do I get the money automatically?

Elaine No, you will actually have to claim, and that is done via your midwife.

Gemma So, is it the midwife who will send off for the grant application, or will I have to fill forms out?

James Juliet, probably a good time to bring you in? Do you want to answer that one?

Juliet When you visit your midwife for your ante-natal check, usually around 26 or 28 weeks of pregnancy, we will tell you about the grant and we'll give you the form. So, we have to fill it out, as well, and then we hand it over to you. You simply have to fill out the form and you post it off in a freepost envelope.

Gemma And why are we only able to claim this grant from 25 weeks of pregnancy, and not before?

Juliet The main reason is that we want to be certain that women are having ante-natal checks, and are receiving information from a healthcare professional during their pregnancy. So, it may be that we're just checking you're attending ante-natal classes. We check the foetal well-being when you come for your visits; we check your blood pressure; we take a urine sample; and we want to make sure that you come to your visits and have an

ante-natal check. We also know that after 26 weeks is when you'll really have to prepare for having the baby. So, things like buying cots and nappies, it's really important that you're budgeting then, for when the baby's going to arrive.

Gemma So, what happens if my midwife or doctor forgets to fill in the form when I go for my appointment?

Juliet Well, it is important that you claim before you have the baby. So, any time between 25 and full-term, you need to make sure you've actually filled out the grant form. If your midwife or doctor doesn't have the form when you go to your ante-natal appointment, you need to make sure that next time you visit, then they do have it. Or otherwise, you can contact the helpline, and get information about how to make sure they have the form available for you.

Gemma So, once we've filled out the forms, how do I actually get the money?

James Elaine, probably best you field that one, as the representative of HMRC?

Elaine Well, the form is really simple and easy to fill in. And you just have to send it back to HMRC within 31 days. We even have a pre-paid envelope. Payments will normally be made directly into your bank or building society account. You'll actually get the money 7 days after you receive your award notice from HMRC, and that's basically just a letter from us saying that you've qualified.

James So, Gemma, do you have any more questions for Juliet?

Gemma Yeah. So, when I do go to see my midwife or doctor, what sort of advice will I get from them, with regards to healthy lifestyle?

Juliet Well, this is an opportunity for us to talk to you about things like healthy eating, exercise, how you're coping with the pregnancy. You might want to discuss your birth plan, talk about when you want to go to the hospital. And obviously, if we notice there are any problems, we would be referring you to the hospital. So, for us it's important to know how mum and baby are doing during the pregnancy.

James Well, I've just got a couple of last questions for you, Elaine. Just to clarify, this is a grant that's available for all mums-to-be?

Elaine Expectant mothers have to be resident in the UK, and it's also dependent on immigration status. And babies have to be due on or after 6 April 2009.

James And if anyone listening wants to get more information, where should they go?

Elaine You can go online at www.direct.gov.uk, or you can ring our helpline at 0845 366 7885.

James Well, Elaine, Juliet, Gemma, thank you very much.