

British moms to get healthy food grant

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The British government will unveil a plan this week to give all expectant mothers \$240 to buy healthy food.

The plan, which is expected to be unveiled by Health Secretary Alan Johnson, is part of an effort to bridge the growing health gap between rich and poor children, the Observer reported Sunday.

Beginning in 2009, women will receive the grant in the seventh month of their pregnancy, provided they attend nutrition counseling and quit smoking and drinking.

Critics of the measure say the cash could be spent on cigarettes, alcohol or other unhealthy items, and others say the grant should be given only to poor women, the newspaper said. There is also little research demonstrating that the money and counseling -- which the government predicts will cost between \$160 million and \$180 million per year -- are enough to change eating habits.

But supporters say the measure, if successful, will ultimately save money when healthier babies grow into healthier adults.

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