

fun at day **CAMP**

CHIP 4 TEENS

If your child struggles with extra weight and your family is serious about getting healthier, **CHIP 4 Teens** may interest you. The nine-week camp of the McGill Comprehensive Health Improvement Program has helped overweight teens through health and lifestyle

activities for six years. Participants, who range in age from 12 to 17, are typically from 10 to 50 pounds (4.5 to 22.5 kilograms) overweight, said



director Marla Gold. But “we are not a ‘fat camp’ and don’t want children being forced to come in,” she said. “Rather, we target a specific population – at risk of developing heart disease and diabetes – that is aware they need to make a change and ready to do it.”

Three days a week, the program – supervised by physicians, dieticians, psychologists and exercise physiologists – uses lifestyle activities (biking, yoga, public transport), tailored fitness sessions, and organized sports. The latter are popular with kids who are often the last picked or never get a shot at the ball. “Here, everyone gets a pass,” Gold said. “Inevitably, they come away realizing that they are good at something.”

Not all kids are mature enough to recognize the health risks of being overweight, but through team-building and working with adults other than their parents, campers acquire tools to adopt lifestyle changes and vital self-confidence. “Don’t kid yourself,” Gold said, “self-esteem plays a large part.” The co-ed program at McGill’s Sports Complex features weekly sessions on nutrition and food preparation: for example, critically navigating a food court. Psychological counselling offers secure environments in which to express feelings about body image, emotions affecting diet and more.

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