

Teen Esteem – A gender-specific wellness intervention to promote heart health and reduce risk in teen girls

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Many risk factors for CVD such as obesity, sedentary lifestyle, and poor nutrition have their origins in childhood and adolescence. Adolescent transition is seen as a critical period for the formation of health-promoting behaviors that can greatly influence adult lifestyles. These are pivotal years and concerned health educators at Trenton Central High School in Trenton, NJ contacted the Women's Heart Foundation (WHF) for help. Students were falling behind academically and many worked after school to contribute to the household income. Their lives had little structure with no regular family meal time. Skipped meals were the norm and it appeared that no one was monitoring their health choices. Other concerns were a rise in HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, high drop-out rate, increase in gangs and gang-related deaths. The teachers' pleas were answered in November 2003, when (WHF) was awarded a \$200,000 grant from the NJDHSS Office on Women's Health and the Department of Human Services and Teen Esteem was born. The objective was to improve cardiovascular fitness of 10th grade female students.

The goals: • an increase in participant self-esteem. • a reduction in participant cardiovascular risk factors. • improved nutrition habits. Blood glucose levels and a lipid panel are being measured at the beginning and end of the program with a research team from Rutgers University –Camden quantifying results. Two certified fitness trainers and a dietitian staff the Teen Esteem program under the direct supervision of the head teacher. The first data collection report is due mid November 2005.