

Health and Fitness for All:

Small Changes, Lifelong Benefits



WHAT IS HEALTH AND FITNESS FOR ALL?

The Health and Fitness for All program utilizes the evidence-based [HealthMatters™](#) 12-week health and wellness curriculum designed for individuals with ID. HealthMatters teaches the importance of healthy eating, portion control, and physical activity. Classes meet a few times per week throughout the program, with each class focusing on a different health message. The Health and Fitness for All program has been piloted at two chapters of The Arc—The Arc of Gloucester in New Jersey and Advocacy Denver in Colorado. In addition to lessons on nutrition and exercise, between January 2015 and December 2015 the program provided nearly 800 healthy snacks and exposed 49 participants to a variety of new healthy foods. The program has also supported these chapters of The Arc to prioritize their overall efforts around healthy living and eating. The goal is to expand this health promotion program to more chapters of The Arc throughout the United States.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) are at an increased risk for obesity compared to the general population. There are many factors that can contribute to this increased risk—lack of healthy food options, mobility limitations, lack of physical activity opportunities, difficulty chewing, food sensitivities, and absence of role models. Unhealthy weight can lead to many secondary health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke. The Arc’s Health and Fitness for All program helps individuals with ID adopt healthy habits and lead healthier lives.



Increased Knowledge Gain and Improved Health

POST-TESTS REVEALED:

55%



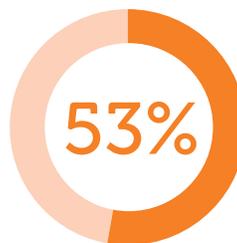
of participants increased their knowledge

48%



rated their health better

AT THE COMPLETION OF THE 12-WEEK PROGRAM:

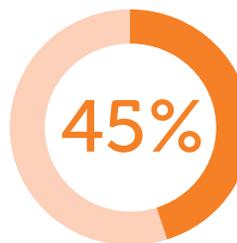


lost weight



total weight lost

OTHER PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDED:



of participants decreased their BMI



of participants decreased their blood pressure levels

Pre- and post-tests are administered on the first and last days of the program to gather data on height, weight, BMI, and blood pressure. Data is also collected to gauge participant's consumption and knowledge of healthy foods, and on improvement in health.

A total of 49 people have participated in the program at Advocacy Denver and The Arc of Gloucester. Participants gained knowledge about healthy practices and instructors noticed changes in behaviors. Participants included more fruits and vegetables in their meals, and white bread was replaced with healthier whole wheat bread.



Small changes over time help make a big impact on overall health. Visit thearc.org/healthmeet to learn more about how to improve the health of individuals with ID.