

## **CHIP: Healthy by Choice, Not Chance**

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CHIP is changing Rockford, and Rockford is changing the world. CHIP's mission is to stimulate a "national health transformation" from the "inside-out" by educating, motivating, and inspiring people from all walks of life "to be healthy by choice, not chance." That's the concept, and the concept is sprouting roots.

### **The CHIP Program**

CHIP is an educationally intensive lifestyle intervention program with more than 40,000 graduates worldwide. Endorsed by the Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, both headquartered in Washington, D.C., the CHIP program focuses on developing a greater measure of intelligent self-care involving a clearer understanding of the nature and etiology of heart disease, its epidemiology and its risk factors.

The program aims at a marked reduction of the coronary risk factor levels through the adoption of better health habits and lifestyle choices. The goal is to facilitate disease reversal by lowering blood cholesterol, triglycerides and blood sugar levels, by reducing excess weight, lowering high blood pressure, enhancing daily exercise, and by eliminating smoking.

The CHIP curriculum is carefully structured and emphasizes the prominent role diet plays in the etiology and reversal of many chronic diseases.

Risk factor levels are carefully assessed before the educational intervention begins, immediate following the completion of the 40-hour educational program. The clinical results have been published in the *American Journal of Cardiology* (1998), the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (2002) and the *Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2004).

The CHIP Optimal Diet promotes largely unrefined foods-as-grown, with a large variety coming from grains, legumes, vegetables and fresh fruits. Such a natural whole-food diet is very low in fat and cholesterol, sugar and salt, yet high in fiber, antioxidants and micronutrients. It represents a carefully chosen departure from the typically rich Western diet and is designed to facilitate disease reversal.

### **The CHIP Prescription**

CHIP is based on the findings of the U.S. Surgeon General that some 70% of our so-called Western diseases are largely "lifestyle-related." These diseases relate largely to our

rich diet, our lack of exercise, our use of cigarettes, alcohol, and caffeine, our level of stress, and the quality of our support. The diseases include: heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, gout, arthritis, overweight, certain adult cancers, impotence, diverticular disease, constipation, heartburn, and gall bladder disease.

The CHIP program is community-based, works closely with referring physicians, schools, and local restaurants and sustains adherence to the program guidelines through an active CHIP alumni support organization.

Wherever CHIP—as the flagship of the lifestyle medicine approach—is conducted, the clinical feedback is consistent: people take charge of their lifestyle, and their healthy lifestyle will take care of them.

Once people understand the cause and effect relationship between their lifestyle choices, and disease, many will no longer opt for the good life but for the best life possible (see PDF attached: “Chicago Tribune”). Church people, employees, corporate executives, and hospital administrators everywhere are making new commitments towards health, because while they realize that health may not be everything, they also recognize that without health, everything is nothing.

### **The Rockford Files**

The Rockford CHIP program is a good example of how CHIP works from a “nuts and bolts” perspective. Initially hosted by the SwedishAmerican Health System, the CHIP program has established itself at the Eiger Lab, Rockford’s incubator for “the new Rockford.” The goal is to graduate a “critical mass” of 7,000 residents and to make Rockford a model city of health. Now, with nearly 4,000 graduates, Rockford area restaurants have taken notice of the changing tastes of their clientele. From fine dining to fast food, they are building business through healthy menu options that are identified as “CHIP approved” to the customer with a heart-healthy graphic. Made more fully aware of the Disease-Diet connection by the CHIP program, people are looking for healthier food options.

Joe Castrogiovanni, owner of Giovanni’s, a fine dining restaurant and convention center, has utilized CHIP approved menu items for over five years. It currently has 12 CHIP items on its dinner menu as well as a selection on its banquet menu.



And Genghis Khan, a popular CHIP restaurant, now offers more than 30 CHIP-approved dishes. And these are only two of more than 30 Rockford restaurants offering the healthy menu choices!

While efforts are underway to affect the health care and school systems, corporations and faith communities, more recently, Doug Scott, the mayor of Rockford, has set a goal for his city to shed 150,000 pounds of extra weight. At the same time, national CHIP training seminars are being held in Rockford three times a year showcasing the progress that is being made. The growing popularity of CHIP and its health transforming power is catching the attention of health conscious people in other parts of the world. Last year, CHIP hosted visitors from India, Australia and Singapore who came to Rockford to see for themselves and to learn how to introduce a healthier lifestyle on a community-wide basis.

The goal of CHIP is not to force a healthy lifestyle on everyone in Rockford (and in more than 250 cities where CHIP programs are running). CHIP's intention is to expose people everywhere to scientific information so that, once more, they can be healthy again by choice and not by chance.

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