

**Title:** Participation in a Physical Activity-based Lifestyle Program May Influence Food Behaviors in Adults with, or at Risk of, Chronic Diseases

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## Abstract

### **Objectives**

The objective of this study was to determine whether participation in a 12-week, physical activity-based lifestyle program influences food behaviors in adults experiencing – or at risk of – chronic health conditions.

### **Design, Methods and Instruments**

Participants who graduated from *Exercise is Medicine Greenville*<sup>®</sup> (EIMG<sup>®</sup>) from January 28-March 2, 2020 completed a ten-question paper survey (involving Likert scales and frequencies) on food behaviors as part of their exit interview. The survey was designed to capture whether participants' nutrition self-efficacy, perceived and estimated dietary habits, and perceived barriers to healthy eating changed from pre- to post-EIMG<sup>®</sup>. Survey results of 14 EIMG<sup>®</sup> graduates were descriptively reported.

### **Results**

Seventy-nine percent of participants reported an improvement in nutrition self-efficacy, indicating that going through EIMG<sup>®</sup> has made them more confident that they can eat a healthy diet (Figure 1). Additionally, 71% of participants reported improved dietary habits over the course of the program. To support this finding, participants reported an increase in estimated fruit and vegetable intake, and a decrease in consumption of sweets and baked goods, and sugar-sweetened beverages (Figure 2). Finally, graduates reported a reduction in barriers to healthy eating after completing EIMG<sup>®</sup>.

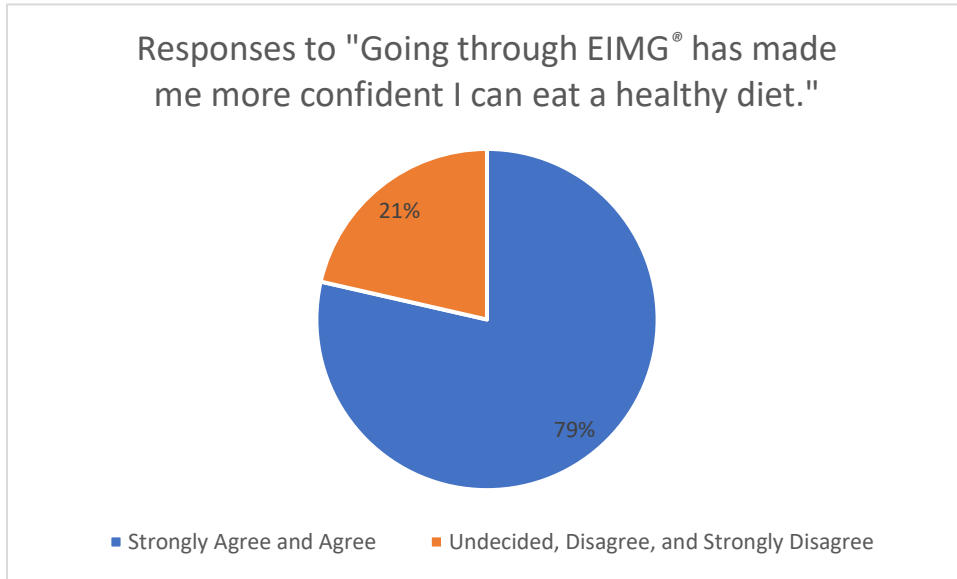
### **Conclusions**

EIMG<sup>®</sup> graduates reported healthier food behaviors at the end of the program compared to prior to enrollment. All reported measures of nutrition self-efficacy, perceived and estimated dietary habits, and barriers to healthy eating improved. Further research with a larger cohort is necessary to determine whether participation in a physical activity-based lifestyle program serves as a gateway to healthier food behaviors.

### **Conflict of interest**

Authors report no conflicts of interest.

**Figure 1: Change in Nutrition Self-Efficacy**



**Figure 2: Change in Median Estimated Dietary Intakes**

