Healthy in the City:
A community-based program to address childhood obesity in Boston
Healthy in the City

- For more than 15 years, Boston Children’s Hospital has partnered with 10 community health centers across 7 Boston neighborhoods to implement our Healthy in the City program.
Healthy in the City

• Each year 1,000 children participate in the program, allowing them to receive case management and resources for nutrition and physical activity, such as:
  o Health education
  o Cooking classes and nutrition education workshops
  o Food distribution and food security resources
  o Fitness classes and gym memberships
  o Connections to community organizations
“At the start of each cooking class, we do a ‘Water is Best’ activity, where we discuss the sugar content of popular sugar-sweetened beverages and identify the maximum quantity recommended for daily consumption. To supplement this activity, each class begins with a demonstration of how to make flavored water using various fruits and/or herbs.”

- Case Manager
“At the end of each Karate and Zumba class that we offer, we have a nutritionist come talk to the children about the importance of healthy eating.”

- Case Manager
Program Effectiveness

- Two-thirds of program participants decrease their Body Mass Index (BMI)

- Children have demonstrated statistically significant behavior changes to maintain healthy weight
  - Decreased consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and fast food
  - Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables
  - Greater time spent exercising
  - Less sedentary screen time
“It’s easy for us to say what people ‘need’ to do to be healthy. It’s often harder for them to actually implement those changes. Community health centers can help by providing education and resources, without being rigid in the approach.”

- Evaluation Manager
“Positive changes in individual behavior related to diet and exercise can reduce the risk of developing a chronic disease. It is important, however, to acknowledge that individual behaviors are inextricably linked to the social and economic context of an individual's life.”

- Boston Public Health Commission
bostonchildrens.org/community