

Weighty problems tackled

By Clare Bruce

A NEW program developed by The Children's Hospital at Westmead is changing the lives of teenagers who struggle with their weight.

It's called the Loozit program and it was developed by research dietitians.

Loozit is helping those in the 13-16 age group not only lose weight but also to make positive changes in their lifestyle.

Next week, this program, which is free, is coming to The Hills.

Jared Shepherd, 14, attended the first round of the program last year with nine others.

"I thought the program would be beneficial for me because I've got a family history of heart disease and obesity and diabetes," Jared said.

"I wouldn't call myself overweight but it was more like 'it wouldn't hurt to lose some'. I've been like that ever since I can remember."

Jared said that Loozit was both practical and enjoyable.

He said it had boosted his self-esteem and had



Getting fit: Jared Shepherd of Quakers Hill, a Loozit participant, is pictured in the gym at his father's garage in Baulkham Hills, where he works out with his friends and with his dad. **Picture:** Natalie Spiteri

improved his looks.

"They said to us on the first day: 'It's not like biggest loser, but a lifestyle change.'

"In our sessions we discussed things like the habits of our lifestyle, eating habits, what sort of fast food to get, and how to manage stress.

"And we did a practical activity or game at the end of each session - a fun way of exercising.

"I was bullied a lot at school, and so a couple of the sessions really helped me in that."

Jared says he feels a lot better about himself since the program.

"I've lost bad weight and put on muscle weight," he said.

"I'm eating less fast food, and I'm more confident."

The next programs begin next Monday, October 15, at the Hills Community Health Centre and The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

■ **Details:** Janice O'Connor on 9845 1291 or Vanessa Shrewsbury 9845 3015.