

Active Living Research

Using Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity
and Create Active Communities

ARTICLE SUMMARY

February 2013

Where Are Families Active Together?

Introduction

Parents may play an important role in influencing their children's physical activity. Yet little is known about where adults and children are active or sedentary when together. This study looks at those locations and if there was a relation to parents' or children's weight.

Key Findings

We found that parents and their children spent an average of 233.6 minutes together in the same location per day. Within this time, parents and children engaged in 2.4 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) together and 92.9 minutes of being sedentary together. Parents performed 7.4 minutes of sedentary behavior while their child was engaging in MVPA nearby. Children were sedentary for 1.9 minutes per day while their parent was engaging in MVPA nearby.

Methods

We collected accelerometer and GPS data from 291 parent-child pairs in Chino, Calif. Children ranged in age from 8 to 15 years old. The accelerometers measured levels of participants' MVPA. GPS data provided information on the locations of where parents and children were active or sedentary. The children were 52.2 percent female and 43 percent Hispanic. The majority of parents were female (87.6%) and had an average age of 40 years.

Implications

Most of the places where parents and children were active together were located in parks and open spaces. This finding underscores the importance of such settings for promoting physical activity. However, overweight or obese parents and children were less likely to be active in parks and open spaces; they were more likely to be active together on school grounds, public facilities (e.g. community centers, churches), and commercial spaces (e.g. retail stores and restaurants). It will be important to encourage overweight or obese families to get more of their activity in parks and open spaces as evidence has shown that being active in these settings is more enjoyable and is more likely to reach the higher levels of intensity important to achieve greater health benefits.

SOURCE

Dunton, G.F., et al. (2013). Locations of Joint Physical Activity in Parent-Child Pairs Based on Accelerometer and GPS Monitoring. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 45(1 Suppl): S162-S172.

Open access to the full text article is available at:

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12160-012-9417-y>

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