

# Parental Physical Activity: Exploring the Role of Social Support

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**Objectives:** To explore the influence of social support on parental physical activity (PA). **Methods:** Forty parents (21 mothers, 19 fathers) participated in semistructured individual or group interviews. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. **Results:** Instrumental (eg, providing child care, taking over chores), emotional (eg, encouragement, companionship), and informational support (eg, ideas and advice) as well as reciprocal support (eg, giving as well as receiving support) and autonomy support

(eg, respecting one's choices) are important for parents' PA behavior. However, having support for being active is not straightforward in that many parents discussed issues that inhibited the facilitative nature of social support for PA performance (eg, guilt in getting help). **Conclusions:** Results highlight the complex nature of social support in facilitating parental PA.

**Key words:** physical activity, exercise, social support, parent, qualitative

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