

# **Physical activity in young adults with autism spectrum disorder: Parental perceptions of barriers and facilitators**

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Physical activity is important for all people, including individuals on the autism spectrum. However, research shows that individuals with disabilities, including those on the spectrum, are less physically active than individuals without disabilities. This study examined both the things that help and the things that get in the way of individuals on the spectrum from being physically active. Because parents play such an important role in the daily routines and habits of individuals on the spectrum, we interviewed the parents of 8 young adults on the spectrum to get their perspective on the things that help and the things that get in the way of physical activity for their young adults. We found that the attitudes and resources of the parents played a significant part in the physical activity levels of the young adults on the spectrum. Those parents that placed a high value on physical activity and that were physically active themselves had young adults that were also physically active. We also found that many common behavior characteristics associated with autism (lack of interest, lack of understanding, impulsivity, aggressive outbursts) prevented parents from placing their young adults in physical activity settings. At the same time, some typical behavior characteristics (repetitive behaviors, perseveration) helped some young adults on the spectrum establish daily workout routines. Lastly, we found that community resources played a significant factor in physical activity levels. Cities with physical activity programs for individuals with disabilities made it easier for individuals on the spectrum to be physically active.