



Advancing physical activity knowledge and participation  
among Canadians living with spinal cord injury.

## **Does Living Close to a Fitness Facility Lead to More Exercise for People with SCI?**

### ***Purpose***

To examine if living close to an accessible fitness facility is related to more exercise for people with SCI.

### ***Summary***

- Generally, people's thoughts about how close they were to a fitness facility were not the same as how close they actually were.
- People who lived closer to a fitness facility did not do as much intense exercise as those who lived further away from a fitness facility.

### ***Possible applications***

- Living close to an accessible fitness facility does not necessarily lead to more exercise for people with SCI.
- More information about local accessible facilities and programs should be readily available for people with SCI.

### ***Research Abstract***

The relationship between physical activity facility proximity and leisure-time physical activity in persons with spinal cord injury

Background: Within the general able-bodied population, proximity of one's home to physical activity facilities is modestly associated with physical activity behavior. Currently, no research has examined whether facility proximity is related to physical activity among persons living with disabilities.

Objective: To examine (1) the level of agreement between perceived and actual proximity to accessible physical activity facilities and (2) the relationship between facility proximity (perceived and actual) and leisure-time physical activity (LTPA) among persons with spinal cord injury (SCI). It was hypothesized that (1) perceived and actual proximity measures would exhibit low agreement and (2) a small, positive relationship would emerge between proximity (perceived and actual) and LTPA.

Methods: Data from 50 Ontario residents living with SCI (70% male; 52% tetraplegia) were collected for proximity and LTPA. Perceived facility proximity was determined by a self-report "YES" versus "NO" presence measure, while actual facility proximity was assessed using Geographical Information Systems. An SCI-specific instrument, the PARA-SCI, was used to measure LTPA.

Results: Low agreement levels were found between perceived and actual proximity. LTPA status (active versus inactive) was shown to moderate the relationship, with higher agreement levels found for participants who reported engaging in mild or heavy LTPA versus their inactive counterparts, but only for the 30-minute wheeling boundary. Contrary to hypothesis, people living within a 30-minute wheel from an accessible facility were less likely to engage in heavy LTPA than were people who did not have an accessible facility located within a 30-minute wheel. No significant associations were found between LTPA and perceived proximity.

Conclusions: Living in close proximity to a facility that provides accessible programming and equipment does not necessarily translate into greater physical activity behavior.

**Arbour KP, Martin Ginis KA, & The SHAPE-SCI Research Group (2009). The relationship between fitness facility proximity and leisure-time physical activity in persons with spinal cord injury. *Disability and Health, 2*, 128-135.**