



RESEARCH

Behavioral and health science researchers have identified a small number of environmental and policy variables that are related to physical activity, but there are many more hypothesized associations that have not been studied. Intervention studies on promotion of stair use, physical education and improving access to programs have begun to influence national recommendations regarding the promotion of physical activity. Ecological models have helped health-behavior researchers understand the need for multi-level, broad-spectrum health promotion strategies, and the models have brought into sharper focus the power of environmental and policy interventions working at the institutional, community and broadest societal levels.

Researchers outside the health and behavioral sciences have shown how community design and transportation systems have created environments that have reduced daily physical activity for many people. While the vast majority of research has been on the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels of influence on health behaviors, a rapidly growing literature from several fields demonstrates that many physical, environmental and policy factors are associated with physical activity. Thus, the research shows that only multi-level models are adequate to explain physical activity and lead to the development of effective interventions for increasing physical activity population-wide.

The following is a short list of relevant and seminal works that guide and inspire much of urban planning today. We hope it will inform your own efforts and inspire you to seek out additional studies.

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