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What Hispanic parents do to encourage or discourage 3-5 year old children to be active: A qualitative study

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Purpose

Hispanic preschool children may be less active than Anglo-American children. Our aim was to identify what parents do to encourage or discourage physical activity (PA) among Hispanic preschool children.

Methods

Nominal Group Technique (NGT), a structured multi-step group procedure, was used to elicit and prioritize responses from 10 groups of Hispanic parents regarding what parents do to encourage (5 groups) or discourage (5 groups) preschool children to be active. Five groups consisted of parents with low education (less than high school) and 5 with high education (high school or greater) split between the two NGT questions: What are things that parents do that encourage/discourage 3-5 year old children to be active?

Results

Ten NGT groups (n=74, range 4-11/group) generated 20-46 and 42-69 responses/group respectively for practices that encourage or discourage PA. Seven to ten responses/group were elected as the most likely to encourage or discourage PA. Signing child up for sports, participating in activities with child, feeding child well, and role modeling, emerged as the responses with the greatest endorsement across groups to encourage PA among preschool children. Verbal reprimands (scolding, insulting, and emotional abuse), lack of time to engage with child, and leaving the TV on, emerged as the responses with the greatest consensus across groups of practices that discourage PA among preschool children. There were no clear differences in the pattern of responses by education level.

Conclusion

Parents generated candidate PA parenting items that should be further evaluated via fully powered quantitative studies to assess their impact on preschool children's PA.

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