

Background on ALCOA's Mall Mover's Program

Research on Benefits

The **British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA)** has done extensive research into the benefits of mall walk programs. According to their **BCRPA Walking Program Resource Guide**, mall walk programs provide health benefits, community benefits and environmental benefits.

Health Benefits

Brisk walking has the greatest potential for increasing overall activity levels of a sedentary population. Low-income, racial and ethnic minority, and populations with disabilities are more likely to be sedentary than the general population. A walking program can be a widespread community intervention. People walk for pleasure, to socialize, manage or prevent chronic disease. It can also increase energy, strengthen bones and muscles and is virtually injury-free with minimal costs. Studies have confirmed the numerous health benefits of walking:

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce high cholesterol and improve blood lipid profile
- Reduce body fat
- Enhance mental wellbeing
- Increase bone density, thereby helping to prevent osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of cancer of the colon
- Reduce the risk of non-insulin dependent diabetes
- Help to control body weight
- Help osteoarthritis
- Help increase flexibility and co-ordination hence reducing the risk of falls



Community and Mall Benefits

Getting people to walk (and cycle) as leisure options provides environmental and personal health benefits at low cost to the public health system. Seasons and climate significantly influence physical activity levels. Malls glean benefits from the walkers. Many mall managers realize that public services such as walking programs are a good way to get people to come to the mall. Walkers help increase mall traffic and frequently patronize mall stores.

Environmental Benefits

Active Living can reduce pollution when more people decide to walk, rather than use their cars.

How much walking is enough and how fast?

The **Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults 65+ years of age**, recommends 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

The *Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)* Healthy Aging Resource Network also published *Mall Walking – A Resource Guide*. They recommend that participants walk at a brisk pace, every day, but preferably at least three times per week, for at least 30 minutes (30 to 60 minutes is best), is the widely accepted guideline. Doing several short bursts of exercise (i.e. 10-minute sessions), at varied times throughout the day is also widely accepted for achieving health benefits. A simple way to work out how briskly one should walk is to aim to walk “fast without overexertion”. Anyone should be able to hold a conversation while walking – this is the ‘talk test’. Although this varies somewhat by age and fitness level.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Mall Walking Program Environments, Features, and Participants: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Introduction

Walking is a preferred and recommended physical activity for middle-aged and older adults, but many barriers exist, including concerns about safety (ie, personal security), falling, and inclement weather. Mall walking programs may overcome these barriers. The purpose of this study was to summarize the evidence on the health-related value of mall walking and mall walking programs.

Methods

We conducted a scoping review of the literature to determine the features, environments, and benefits of mall walking programs using the RE-AIM framework (reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance). The inclusion criteria were articles that involved adults aged 45 years or older who walked in indoor or outdoor shopping malls. Exclusion criteria were articles that used malls as laboratory settings or focused on the mechanics of walking. We included published research studies, dissertations, theses, conference abstracts, syntheses, non-research articles, theoretical papers, editorials, reports, policy briefs, standards and guidelines, and non-research conference abstracts and proposals. Websites and articles written in a language other than English were excluded.

Results

We located 254 articles on mall walking; 32 articles met our inclusion criteria. We found that malls provided safe, accessible, and affordable exercise environments for middle-aged and older adults. Programmatic features such as program leaders, blood pressure checks, and warm-up exercises facilitated participation. Individual benefits of mall walking programs included improvements in physical, social, and emotional well-being. Limited transportation to the mall was a barrier to participation.

Conclusion

We found the potential for mall walking programs to be implemented in various communities as a health promotion measure. However, the research on mall walking programs is limited and has weak study designs. More rigorous research is needed to define best practices for mall walking programs’ reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance